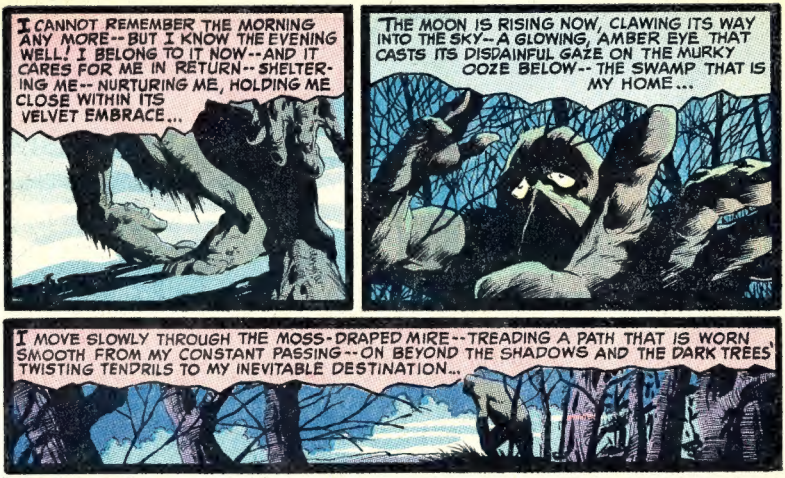
THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
20¢
NO. 9
APR.
30686
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SWAMP THING
WRIGHTSON '73
THE BRONZE AGE OMNIBUS
ORIGINAL COLOR EDITION

DC HOUSE OF SECRETS
15¢
THERE'S NO ESCAPE FROM...
THE HOUSE OF SECRETS
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NO.92
JULY
30250
WRIGHTSON '71

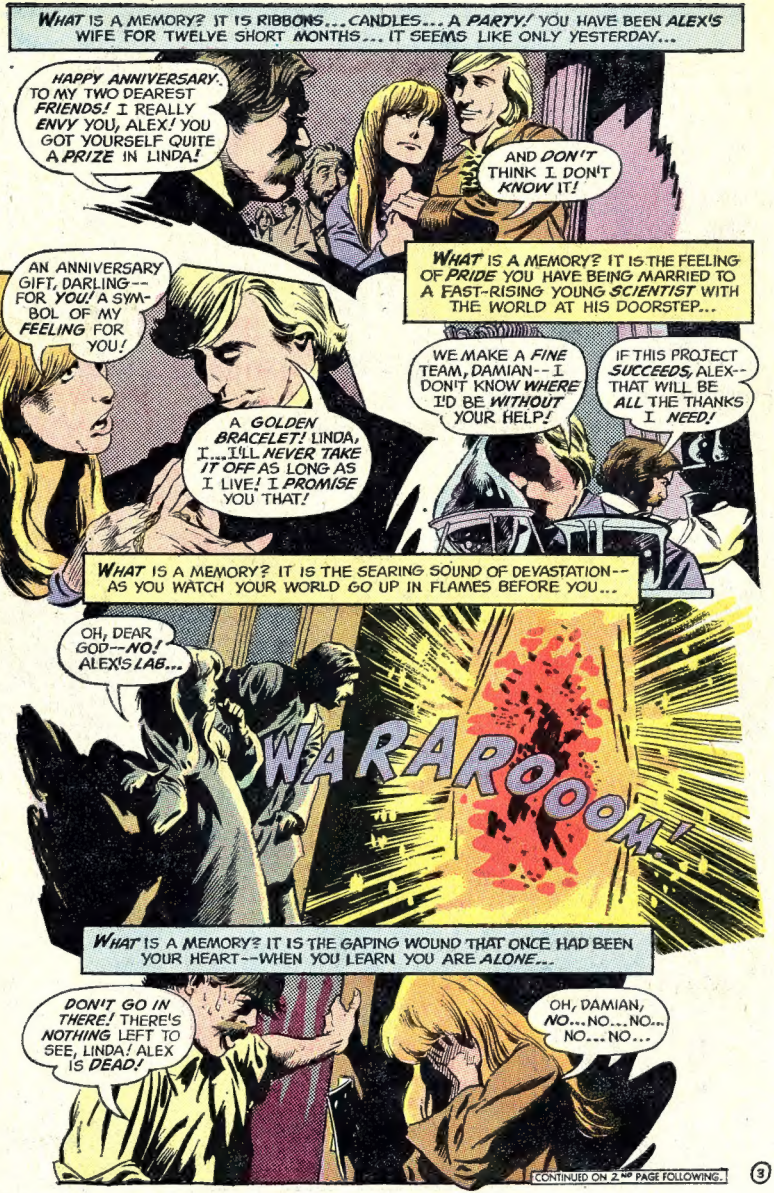

I CANNOT REMEMBER THE MORNING ANY MORE--BUT I KNOW THE EVENING WELL! I BELONG TO IT NOW--AND IT CARES FOR ME IN RETURN--SHELTERING ME--NURTURING ME, HOLDING ME CLOSE WITHIN ITS VELVET EMBRACE...
THE MOON IS RISING NOW, CLAWING ITS WAY INTO THE SKY--A GLOWING, AMBER EYE THAT CASTS ITS DISDAINFUL GAZE ON THE MURKY OOZE BELOW--THE SWAMP THAT IS MY HOME...
I MOVE SLOWLY THROUGH THE MOSS-DRAPED MIRE--TREADING A PATH THAT IS WORN SMOOTH FROM MY CONSTANT PASSING--ON BEYOND THE SHADOWS AND THE DARK TREES' TWISTING TENDRILS TO MY INEVITABLE DESTINATION...

THE EDGE OF THE SWAMP--AND THE MIST-WET OLD MANSION THAT RISES LIKE AN AGING APPARITION INTO A COLD EXPANSE OF SKY--A STATELY SANCTUARY FULL OF BRIGHT LIGHTS AND PROMISES--AND MEMORIES THAT BRING ONLY PAIN...

STORY: LEN WEIN
ART: BERNI WRIGHTSON

SWAMP THING

I HAVE STOOD WATCHING THAT OLD GRAY EDIFICE FOR MORE LONELY NIGHTS THAN I WANT TO RECALL--DREAMING ENDLESSLY OF THE SOFT GOLDEN LADY WHO LIVES WITHIN--KNOWING I CAN NEVER HAVE HER--WONDERING WHAT SHE'S DOING NOW...
YOU SMILE BECAUSE HE EXPECTS YOU TO--BUT IN THE SHADOWED CORRIDORS OF YOUR HEART THERE IS NO REAL JOY--THERE NEVER CAN BE...
A TOAST, MY DARLING--TO US! TODAY IS SIX MONTHS SINCE WE WERE WED!
YOUR NAME IS LINDA OLSEN RIDGE--AND YOUR MIND IS A RAGING RIVER THIS NIGHT--CARRYING YOUR THOUGHTS ALONG A SURGING STREAM OF CONSCIOUSNESS--SENDING MEMORIES CRASHING LIKE WAVES UPON SOME DISTANT SHORE...
YOU'RE THINKING ABOUT ALEX AGAIN, AREN'T YOU, DARLING? I CAN SEE IT IN YOUR EYES!
I'M SORRY, DAMIAN--IT'S JUST THAT HE'S STILL SO REAL TO ME!
LINDA, ALEX OLSEN IS DEAD--AND YOU ARE MY WIFE NOW! EVENTUALLY, YOU WILL HAVE TO REALIZE THAT FACT! ALEX IS GONE, DARLING--THERE IS NOTHING TO DO BUT FORGET HIM!
NEVER--FOR TO FORGET ALEX OLSEN IS TO DENY A PART OF YOURSELF--A GOOD PART--FILLED WITH HAPPY SUMMER DAYS AND STAR-DAPPLED NIGHTS--MIST COVERS YOUR EYES--AND MEMORIES FALL WITH THE TEARS...
2


WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS RIBBONS... CANDLES... A PARTY! YOU HAVE BEEN ALEX'S WIFE FOR TWELVE SHORT MONTHS... IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY...
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY. TO MY TWO DEAREST FRIENDS! I REALLY ENVY YOU, ALEX! YOU GOT YOURSELF QUITE A PRIZE IN LINDA!
AND DON'T THINK I DON'T KNOW IT!
WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS THE FEELING OF PRIDE YOU HAVE BEING MARRIED TO A FAST-RISING YOUNG SCIENTIST WITH THE WORLD AT HIS DOORSTEP...
AN ANNIVERSARY GIFT, DARLING-- FOR YOU! A SYMBOL OF MY FEELING FOR YOU!
A GOLDEN BRACELET! LINDA, I...I'LL NEVER TAKE IT OFF AS LONG AS I LIVE! I PROMISE YOU THAT!
WE MAKE A FINE TEAM, DAMIAN-- I DON'T KNOW WHERE I'D BE WITHOUT YOUR HELP!
IF THIS PROJECT SUCCEEDS, ALEX-- THAT WILL BE ALL THE THANKS I NEED!
WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS THE SEARING SOUND OF DEVASTATION-- AS YOU WATCH YOUR WORLD GO UP IN FLAMES BEFORE YOU...
OH, DEAR GOD--NO! ALEX'S LAB...
WARAROOM!
WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS THE GAPING WOUND THAT ONCE HAD BEEN YOUR HEART--WHEN YOU LEARN YOU ARE ALONE...
DON'T GO IN THERE! THERE'S NOTHING LEFT TO SEE, LINDA! ALEX IS DEAD!
OH, DAMIAN, NO...NO...NO... NO...NO...
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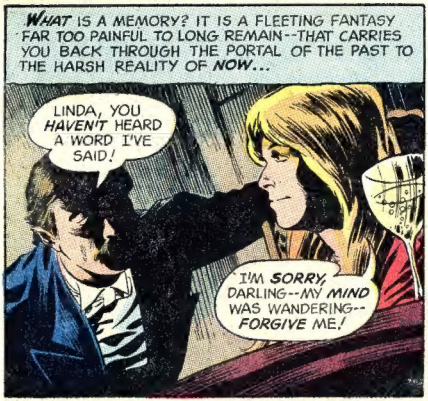
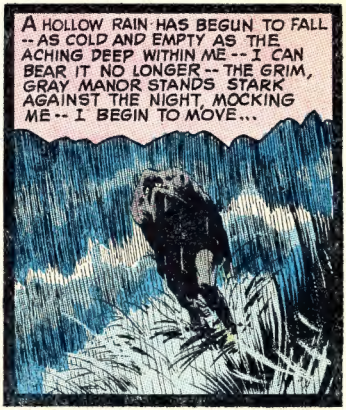
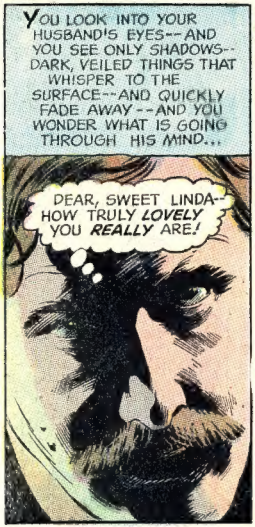

WHAT IS A MEMORY? IT IS A FLEETING FANTASY FAR TOO PAINFUL TO LONG REMAIN--THAT CARRIES YOU BACK THROUGH THE PORTAL OF THE PAST TO THE HARSH REALITY OF NOW...
LINDA, YOU HAVEN'T HEARD A WORD I'VE SAID!
I'M SORRY, DARLING--MY MIND WAS WANDERING--FORGIVE ME!


A HOLLOW RAIN HAS BEGUN TO FALL--AS COLD AND EMPTY AS THE ACHING DEEP WITHIN ME--I CAN BEAR IT NO LONGER--THE GRIM, GRAY MANOR STANDS STARK AGAINST THE NIGHT, MOCKING ME--I BEGIN TO MOVE...

THE NIGHT HAS GROWN COLDER NOW--YOU CAN FEEL IT CROUCHED IN THE DARKNESS--WAITING FOR YOU...
IS SOMETHING WRONG, LINDA? YOU DON'T SEEM WELL!
ONLY THE CHILL NIGHT AIR, DARLING--IT WILL PASS!


YOU LOOK INTO YOUR HUSBAND'S EYES--AND YOU SEE ONLY SHADOWS--DARK, VEILED THINGS THAT WHISPER TO THE SURFACE--AND QUICKLY FADE AWAY--AND YOU WONDER WHAT IS GOING THROUGH HIS MIND...
DEAR, SWEET LINDA--HOW TRULY LOVELY YOU REALLY ARE!

"I NEVER REALLY FORGAVE ALEX FOR MARRYING YOU WHEN HE KNEW HOW MUCH I LOVED YOU--YOU'LL NEVER KNOW HOW HARD IT WAS FOR ME TO KEEP UP THE FACADE OF THE 'ETERNAL FRIEND'..."
HAPPY ANNIVERSARY TO MY TWO DEAREST FRIENDS!

"TO SEE YOU EVERY DAY--SO CLOSE AND YET SO IMPOSSIBLY DISTANT--NEVER TO KNOW YOUR TOUCH OR THE FRAGRANCE OF YOUR HAIR--IT WAS MORE THAN I COULD BEAR..."
"IT WAS I WHO ARRANGED THE EXPLOSION--ALONE AT NIGHT IN ALEX'S DARKENED LABORATORY--QUIETLY ALTERING THE VITAL COMPONENTS--TO RID MYSELF OF THE ONLY OBSTACLE IN MY WAY--MY BEST FRIEND..."
"YOU'LL NEVER KNOW THAT ALEX WASN'T KILLED IN THE EXPLOSION--THAT I CARRIED HIS BATTERED AND BLOODY FORM OUT INTO THE FETID INTERIOR OF THE SWAMP BEYOND--AND BURIED IT THERE..."
I WAS EVERY BIT THE BEREAVED FRIEND AT THE FUNERAL--ALWAYS THE COMFORTING SHOULDER--THE TENDER WORD--IT WAS ONLY A MATTER OF TIME UNTIL YOU TURNED TO ME FOR COMFORT--OUR MARRIAGE WAS INEVITABLE!
FORGIVE ME, DARLING--BUT THE CHILL HAS GROWN WORSE! PERHAPS I OUGHT TO RETIRE TO MY ROOM!
OF COURSE, LINDA--HOW THOUGHTLESS OF ME! GO AHEAD... I'LL JOIN YOU SHORTLY!

YOU WALK QUIETLY DOWN THE CORRIDOR TO THE SHELTER OF YOUR ROOM--AND YOU CAN FEEL DAMIAN'S GAZE FOLLOWING YOU--SEARING TREMORS INTO THE SMALL OF YOUR BACK...
SHE CAN'T BEAR MY TOUCH ANYMORE--THAT'S THE FIRST SIGN! ALL THE LITTLE SCRAPS OF INFORMATION SHE'S BEEN GATHERING ARE COMING TOGETHER AT LAST!

IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE SHE REALIZES THAT I KILLED ALEX--AND THAT WILL MEAN MY END! HOWEVER MUCH I CARE FOR LINDA, MY OWN NECK COMES FIRST--LINDA MUST DIE!

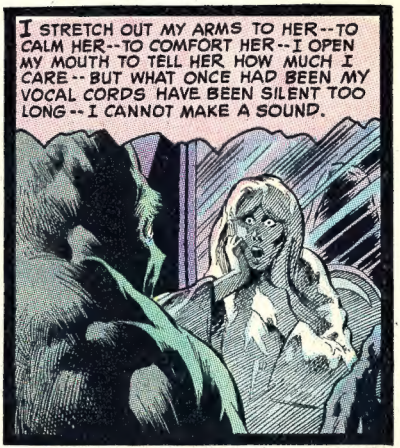
THE CANDLES THAT LIGHT YOUR ROOM PROVIDE THE ONLY REAL WARMTH YOU'VE FELT THIS NIGHT--BUT EVEN THROUGH THAT MELLOW GLOW, THE CHILL RETURNS ONCE MORE...
DAMIAN IS HALF-WAY ACROSS THE HOUSE... WHY CAN'T I SHAKE THE FEELING THAT SOMEONE IS WATCHING ME?

MY HEART BEATS SOFTLY ONCE AGAIN--FOR THE SPARKLE IN HER EYES FILLS MY SOUL WITH A JOY I CANNOT DESERVE--LINDA--. HER NAME RINGS LIKE FINE CRYSTAL--HER HAIR SHINES LIKE GOLD...
LINDA? ARE YOU FEELING BETTER, DARLING?

A LITTLE BETTER, I SUPPOSE, DAMIAN...; BUT DON'T WORRY YOURSELF--IT REALLY IS NOTHING!
NONSENSE! COME--I'LL MASSAGE YOUR NECK--THAT SHOULD WORK OUT THE CHILL!
I WATCH DAMIAN RIDGE WALK SOFTLY ACROSS THE RUG AND SOMETHING GLITTERS IN HIS HAND--A HYPODERMIC NEEDLE!

HE STANDS SILENTLY BEHIND HER, THE NEEDLE POISED TO STRIKE--TO END THE LIFE OF THE ONLY THING IN THIS WORLD THAT MAKES MY EXISTENCE BEARABLE--THE ONLY REASON I LIVE--FURY FILLS THE SPACES BEHIND MY EYES--AND I WALK INTO THE ROOM...
OH, GOD-- NO!
CRRASSHHHH!
WITH A SPEED I HAVE NEVER KNOWN BEFORE, I MOVE THE FETID BULK THAT IS MY BODY ACROSS THE SPAN OF FEET--AND THE CLAW THAT IS MY HAND CLOSES UPON DAMIAN'S WRIST--CRUSHING IT...
GET AWAY-- GET AWAY FROM... ARRRGGHH!
SLOWLY--CERTAINLY--I FORCE THE LIFE FROM DAMIAN'S BLACK-HEARTED BODY--A LIFE HE DOES NOT DESERVE...
FOR SEVERAL SHORT MINUTES, DAMIAN RIDGE STRUGGLES FOR HIS UNWORTHY LIFE--TEARING, CLAWING, RIPPING DECAYING SHREDS FROM WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN MY FLESH--UNTIL, AT LAST, HE LIES STILL--FOREVER...
...AND MY BRIGHT, GOLDEN LADY STANDS SCREAMING BEHIND ME...
7

THE LOATHSOME MONSTROSITY TURNS FROM THE BODY OF YOUR HUSBAND AND REACHES FOR YOU WITH ARMS DRIPPING FILTH--FEAR WELLS UP WITHIN YOU LIKE A FLOOD--AND THE SOUND OF YOUR OWN SCREAMING RINGS IN YOUR EARS...
NO... NO... STAY AWAY... EEEyyyAAAHH!


I STRETCH OUT MY ARMS TO HER--TO CALM HER--TO COMFORT HER--I OPEN MY MOUTH TO TELL HER HOW MUCH I CARE--BUT WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN MY VOCAL CORDS HAVE BEEN SILENT TOO LONG--I CANNOT MAKE A SOUND.

THE TORTURED, SHATTERED LOOK IN HER ONCE-SPARKLING EYES IS MORE THAN I CAN ENDURE -- I TURN MY FACE AWAY FROM HER--AND I START TO GO HOME...
8

ONLY THE SWAMP IS KIND TO ME NOW--IT IS ONLY THE SWAMP THAT CARES--I LOOK DOWN AT MY WRIST--AT THE BARREN PLACE WHERE ONCE THERE WAS A GOLDEN BRACELET --AND I WONDER WHERE IT IS...

--IF TEARS COULD COME-- THEY WOULD!
THE END

SWAMP
DC
THING
FIRST STARTLING ISSUE
20¢
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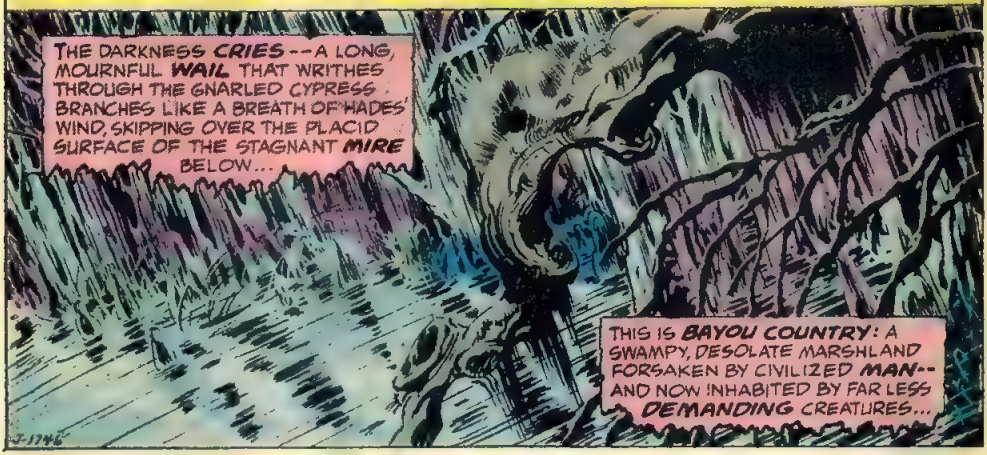
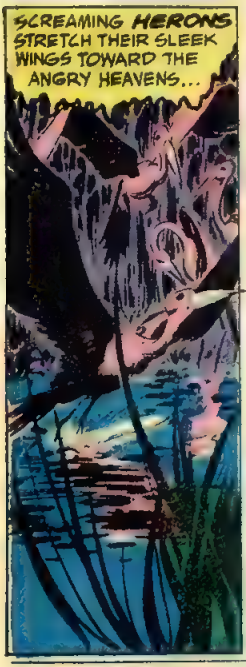
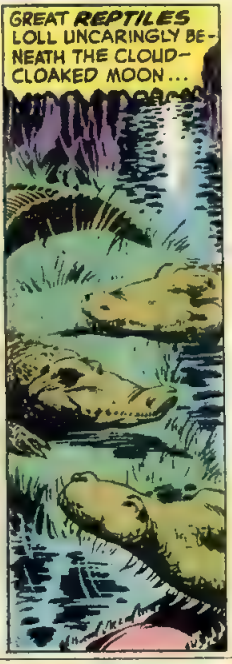
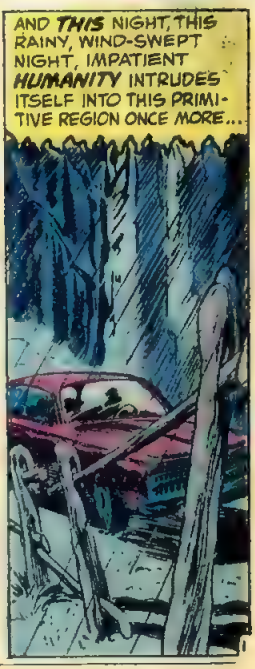
BEGINNING--A NEW KIND OF GRAPHIC EXCITEMENT--

THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING!


THE DARKNESS CRIES--A LONG, MOURNFUL WAIL THAT WRITHES THROUGH THE GNARLED CYPRESS BRANCHES LIKE A BREATH OF HADES' WIND, SKIPPING OVER THE PLACID SURFACE OF THE STAGNANT MIRE BELOW...
THIS IS BAYOU COUNTRY: A SWAMPY, DESOLATE MARSHLAND FORSAKEN BY CIVILIZED MAN--AND NOW INHABITED BY FAR LESS DEMANDING CREATURES...
J-1746







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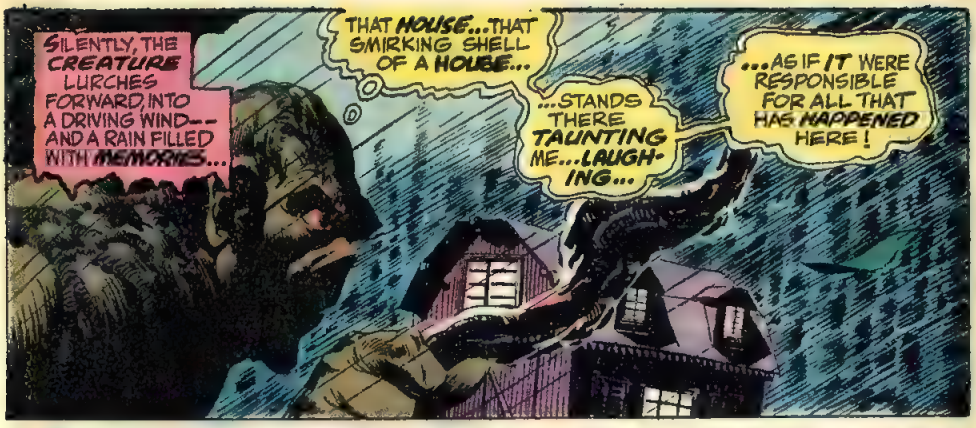
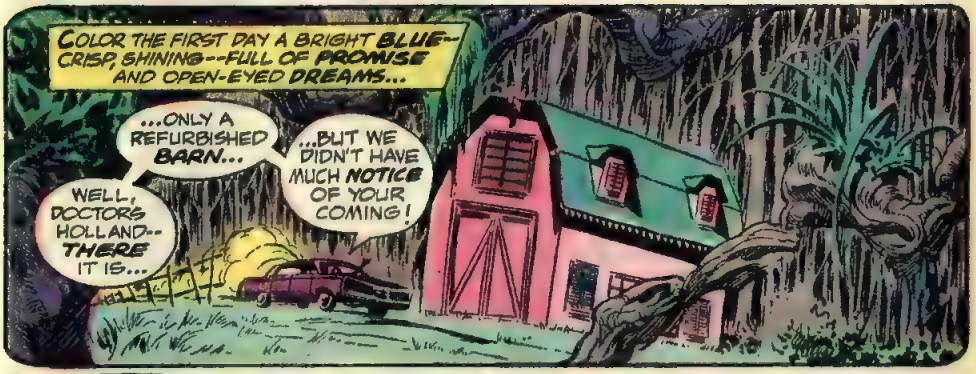
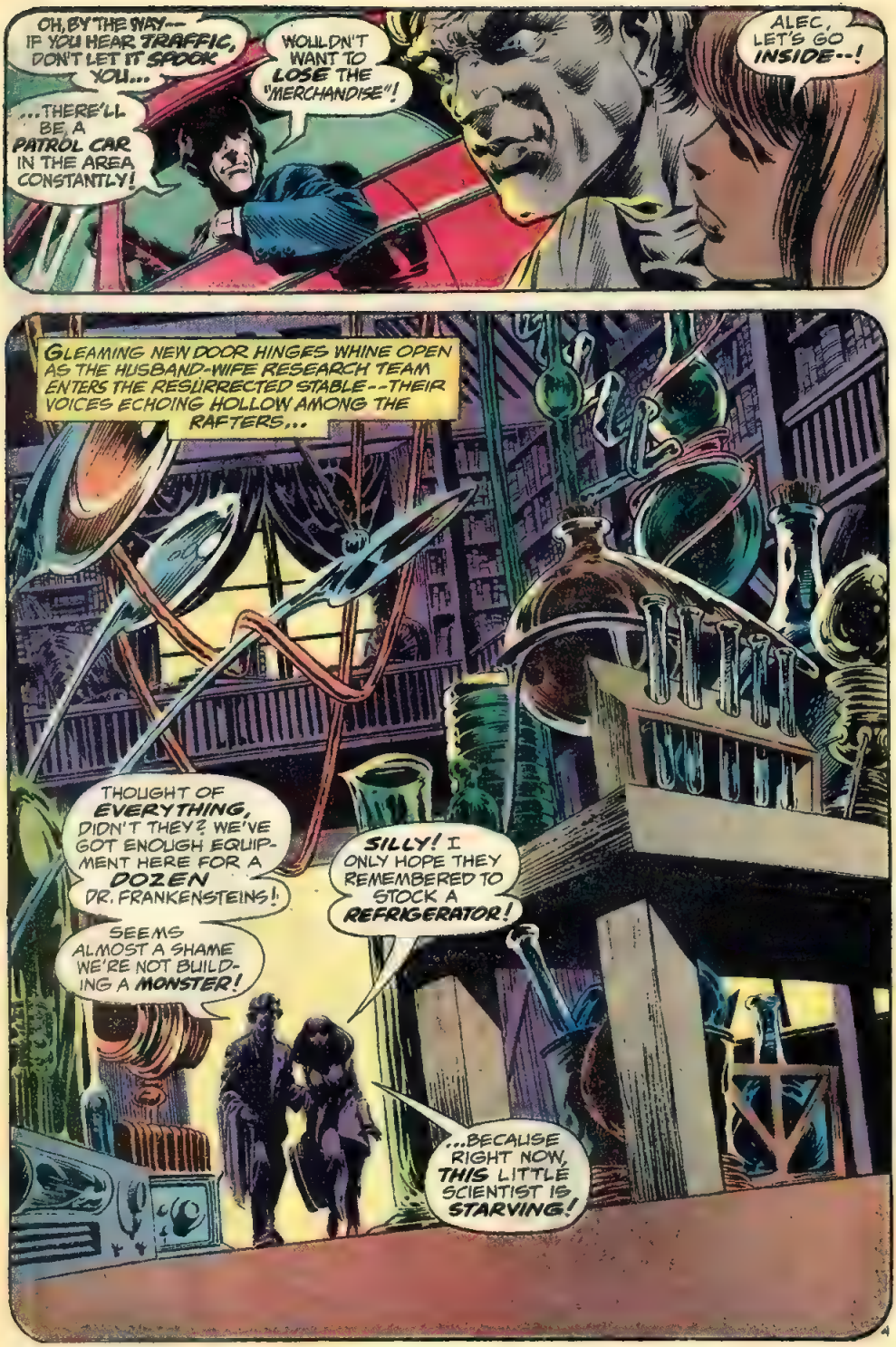
HUMANITY--AND SOMETHING FAR LESS THAN HUMAN!
THE MISSHAPEN MONSTROSITY PRESSES DEEPER INTO THE SHADOWS SURROUNDING THE SINGLE WOODEN STRUCTURE THAT RISES FROM THE BOG...
...AND HIS PUZZLED MIND FAIRLY CRACKLES WITH THOUGHT...
DARK GENESIS!
A NEW DC COMICS CONCEPT!
WRITTEN BY: LEN WEIN
ILLUSTRATED BY: BERNI WRIGHTSON
EDITED BY: JOE ORLANDO
THEY WILL RETURN... THOSE WHO KILLED ME! THEY WILL RETURN...
...AND I WILL BE WAITING!


SILENTLY, THE CREATURE LURCHES FORWARD, INTO A DRIVING WIND--AND A RAIN FILLED WITH MEMORIES...
THAT HOUSE...THAT SMIRKING SHELL OF A HOUSE...
...STANDS THERE TAUNTING ME...LAUGHING...
...AS IF IT WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL THAT HAS HAPPENED HERE!


COLOR THE FIRST DAY A BRIGHT BLUE--CRISP, SHINING--FULL OF PROMISE AND OPEN-EYED DREAMS...
...ONLY A REFURBISHED BARN...
...BUT WE DIDN'T HAVE MUCH NOTICE OF YOUR COMING!
WELL, DOCTORS HOLLAND--THERE IT IS...

WE UNDERSTAND, LT. CABLE--WASHINGTON WANTS TO KEEP OUR PRESENCE HERE TOP-SECRET!
SEEMS WE'RE PRIORITY-ONE MERCHANDISE!
ALEC, PLEASE--YOU MAKE US SOUND LIKE SOMETHING AT A SHOPPER'S SALE!
MAYBE YOU ARE, MRS. HOLLAND...

...THE WORK YOU TWO ARE DOING IN BIO-RESTORATIVE RESEARCH IS INVALUABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT!
THAT'S WHY WE'RE STASHING YOU HERE--IN THIS SUBURB OF NOWHERE...
...TO KEEP YOU OUT OF THE HANDS OF OTHER PROSPECTIVE "SHOPPERS"!


OH, BY THE WAY--- IF YOU HEAR TRAFFIC, DON'T LET IT SPOOK YOU....
...THERE'LL BE A PATROL CAR IN THE AREA CONSTANTLY!
WOULDN'T WANT TO LOSE THE "MERCHANDISE"!
ALEC, LET'S GO INSIDE--!
GLEAMING NEW DOOR HINGES WHINE OPEN AS THE HUSBAND-WIFE RESEARCH TEAM ENTERS THE RESURRECTED STABLE--THEIR VOICES ECHOING HOLLOW AMONG THE RAFTERS...
THOUGHT OF EVERYTHING, DIDN'T THEY? WE'VE GOT ENOUGH EQUIPMENT HERE FOR A DOZEN DR. FRANKENSTEINS!
SILLY! I ONLY HOPE THEY REMEMBERED TO STOCK A REFRIGERATOR!
SEEMS ALMOST A SHAME WE'RE NOT BUILDING A MONSTER!
...BECAUSE RIGHT NOW, THIS LITTLE SCIENTIST IS STARVING!

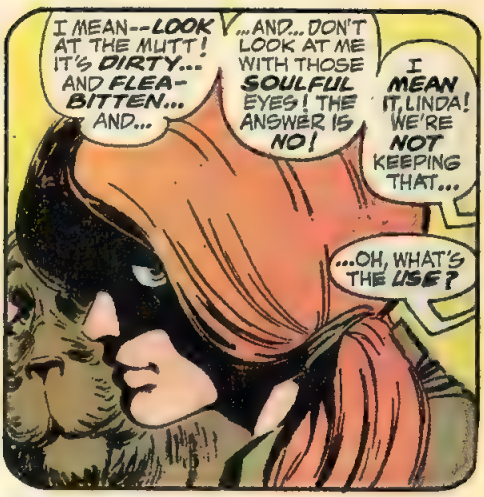
EVENING, A FEW DAYS LATER--AND THE PROJECT IS WELL UNDER WAY...
WELL, SWEETHEART--WHAT DO YOU THINK?
ARE WE READY TO TRY IT?
THEORETICALLY, YES--BUT I WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO QUOTE ME!
I HATE TO BE PROVEN WRONG!
BUT IF WE'RE RIGHT, LARGER QUANTITIES OF OUR CHEMICAL WILL BE USED TO CREATE GARDENS OUT OF SWELTERING DESERTS...
...AND THAT IS DEFINITELY WORTH THE EFFORT!
WELL--CAN I QUOTE YOU NOW?
THE COMPOUND WORKED BETTER THAN...
UH, OH--OL' MATT CABLE AT THE DOOR!
WE'D BETTER LET HIM IN, LINDA!
KNOK!
KNOK!
DR. HOLLAND? MY NAME IS FERRETT!
MY ASSOCIATES AND I WOULD LIKE A WORD WITH YOU IF WE COULD...
...IN PRIVATE!

HOLD ON, FRIEND-- THERE'S SUPPOSED TO BE A CAR PATROLLING THIS AREA!
JUST HOW DID YOU AND YOUR CRONIES GET PAST--?
PLEASE, DR. HOLLAND-- WE HAVE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS TO DISCUSS!
WE THREE REPRESENT A PRIVATE ORGANIZATION INTERESTED IN PURCHASING YOUR BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA...
...SO INTERESTED, IN FACT, THAT WE'VE BEEN AUTHORIZED TO OFFER YOU A BLANK CHECK FOR THE EXCLUSIVE RIGHTS...
...AND IF I WERE YOU, DR. HOLLAND... I'D ACCEPT OUR OFFER!
BUT YOU'RE NOT ME, FRIEND--AND OUR FORMULA ISN'T FOR SALE!
PERHAPS YOU CAN BE CONVINCED OTHERWISE, DOCTOR...
BRUNO, CONVINCE THE GENTLEMAN!
YOU'D BETTER SAVE THE CONVINCIN', FERRETT...
...CAUSE WE GOT COMPANY!
THERE'S ANOTHER CAR COMIN' UP THE ROAD!
HATE TO CUT OUR LITTLE CHAT SHORT, DOCTOR--BUT WE REALLY HAVE TO RUN!
WHY DON'T YOU THINK ABOUT ACCEPTING OUR GENEROUS OFFER?
YOU WOULD SAVE US ALL A LOT OF TROUBLE IF YOU DO!
WE'LL BE SEEING YOU, DR. HOLLAND... SOON!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

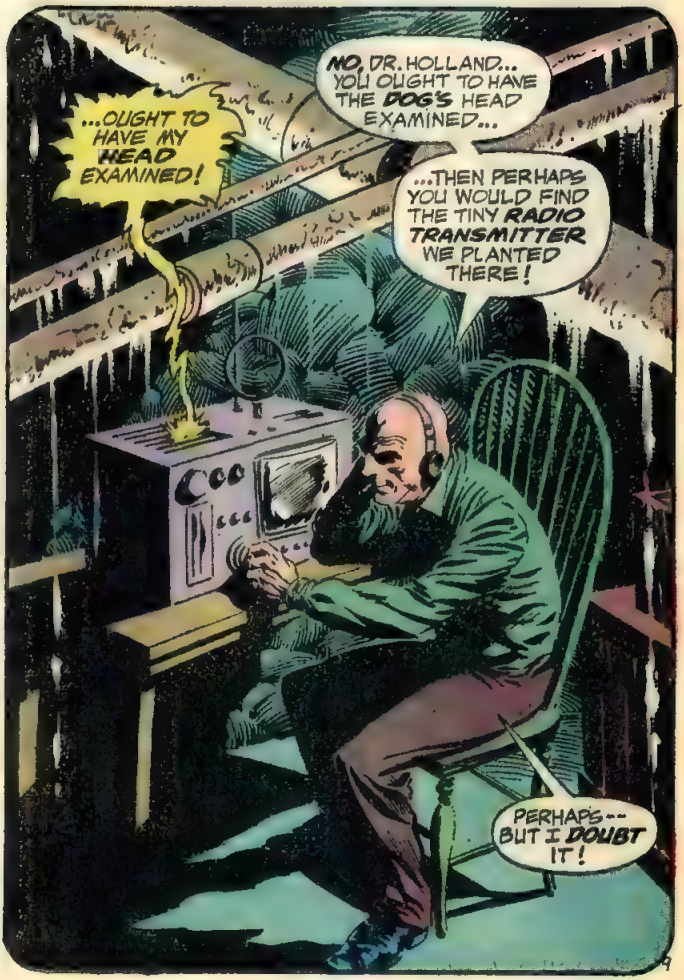
THE SOUND OF ONE CAR MOTOR DIES AWAY TO BE REPLACED BY THE ROAR OF ANOTHER... THEN...
SORRY I'M LATE--BUT THE PATROLMAN THOUGHT HE SAW AN UNREGISTERED CAR IN THE AREA...
CABLE! IT'S ABOUT TIME YOU GOT HERE!
...WE WERE CHECKING IT OUT!
WELL, YOU SHOULD HAVE CHECKED HERE FIRST!
WHAT--? AND YOU LET THEM GET AWAY?
THREE VERY UN-FRIENDLY PEOPLE WERE JUST HERE--ATTEMPTING TO BUY OUR FORMULA!
YOU SHOULD HAVE NOTIFIED THE PATROL GUARD IMMEDIATELY.
AFRAID WE WERE A TRIFLE BUSY AT THE TIME, LT.!
YEAH? WELL, LET ME TELL YOU SOMETHING...
...THAT CONVERSATION WE HAD ABOUT YOU TWO BEING MERCHANDISE WAS NO JOKE!
YOU'RE COMMODITIES, DOCTOR--YOU AND YOUR WIFE--TO BE BOUGHT, SOLD OR TRADED BY WHOEVER CAN MANAGE TO OWN YOU!
WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED HERE, DOCTOR--THE COUNTRY THAT CONTROLS YOUR FORMULA WILL BE ABLE TO CONTROL THE WORLD!
THINK ABOUT THAT! THINK HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD DO ANYTHING TO HOLD YOUR SECRET IN THEIR HANDS--!
AND THINK HOW MANY PEOPLE WOULD RATHER SEE YOU DEAD THAN TO LET THEIR ENEMIES HAVE YOUR FORMULA!
REMEMBER THAT, DOCTOR--THEY'D RATHER SEE YOU DEAD!
NEXT TIME YOU OPEN THAT DOOR, YOU'D BETTER KNOW WHO'S BEHIND IT!

DON'T YOU THINK LT. CABLE WAS BEING OVERLY MELODRAMATIC, ALEC?
I'M NOT SO SURE, LINDA!
THOSE THREE GANGSTER MOVIE REJECTS DIDN'T THREATEN US FOR PRACTICE! THERE'S...
HEY! DO YOU HEAR WHAT I HEAR?
SOMEONE'S MOVING AROUND OUTSIDE!
SCRAPE SCRATCH
FILE C 512-942 GP
BUT IT CAN'T BE MATT CABLE--! HE DROVE AWAY TEN MINUTES AGO!
ALEC? WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
JUST TAKING PRECAUTIONS, LINDA! YOU REMEMBER WHAT CABLE SAID!
THERE'S SOMETHING OUTSIDE THAT DOOR--
AND I'M GOING TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS!
BUT AS THE WARY SCIENTIST FLINGS OPEN THE DOOR...
HA, HA! THERE'S YOUR KILLER, ALEC...
...AN OLD HOUND DOG!
WELL, IT MIGHT JUST AS WELL BE A MURDERER!
THE BLASTED THING ALMOST SCARED ME TO DEATH!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

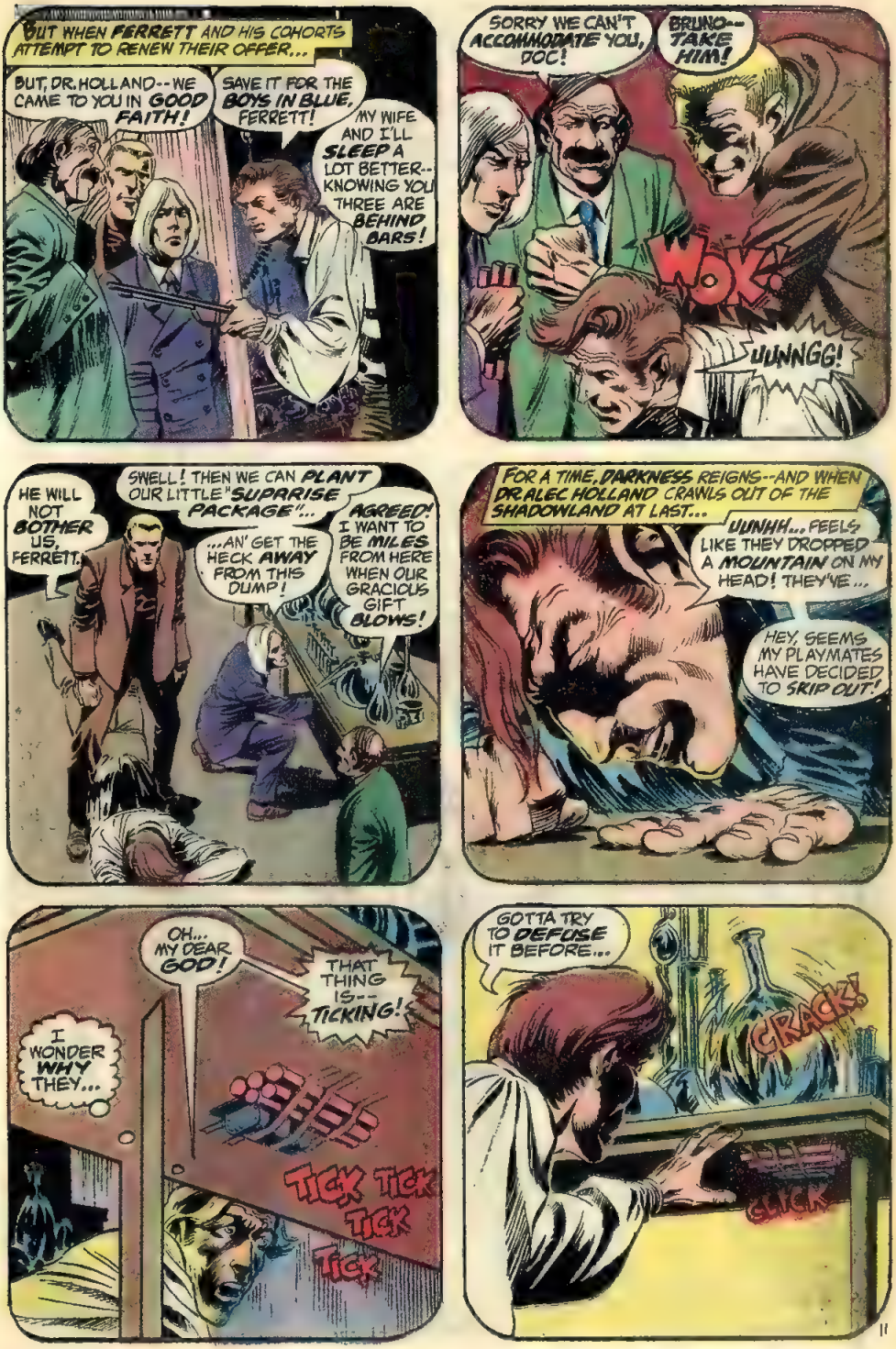
ALEC, HOW CAN YOU SAY THAT?
THE POOR DARLING LOOKS LOST AND HUNGRY!
CAN WE KEEP HIM?
ARE YOU KIDDING? WE'RE OFF-LIMITS...
...TO EVERY-BODY!


I MEAN--LOOK AT THE MUTT! IT'S DIRTY... AND FLEA-BITTEN... AND...
...AND... DON'T LOOK AT ME WITH THOSE SOULFUL EYES! THE ANSWER IS NO!
I MEAN IT, LINDA! WE'RE NOT KEEPING THAT...
...OH, WHAT'S THE USE?

YOU KNOW--FOR A WOMAN SCIENTIST, YOU SURE FIGHT DIRTY!
YOU CAN HAVE THE SHAGGY MUTT...
...AND I OUGHT TO HAVE MY HEAD EXAMINED!


...OUGHT TO HAVE MY HEAD EXAMINED!
NO, DR. HOLLAND... YOU OUGHT TO HAVE THE DOG'S HEAD EXAMINED...
...THEN PERHAPS YOU WOULD FIND THE TINY RADIO TRANSMITTER WE PLANTED THERE!
PERHAPS--- BUT I DOUBT IT!

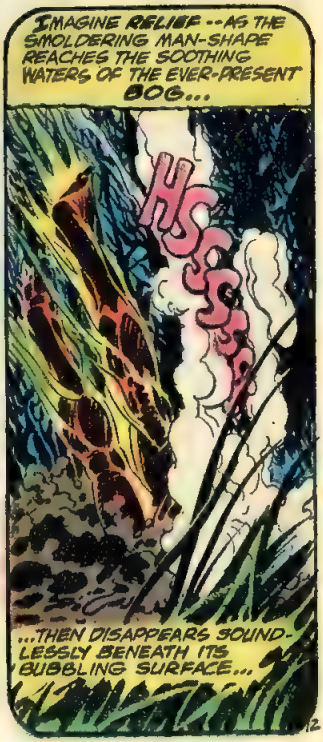
LOUISIANA BLUE TO MISTER E.! REPORTING AS INSTRUCTED!
THE HOLLANDS HAVE TAKEN IN THE DOG AS EXPECTED--ENABLING US TO MONITOR THEIR LAB AT ALL TIMES!
EVERYTHING PROCEEDING ON SCHEDULE!
SPLENDID, AGENT BLUE--YOU HAVE DONE WELL!
AS SOON AS THE GOOD DOCTORS COMPLETE THEIR EXPERIMENTATION, YOU KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE!
SEND FERRETT AROUND TO SEE THEM AGAIN--WITH A REPEAT OF OUR OFFER!
IF WE CAN GET THE FORMULA WITHOUT ANY DIFFICULTY, ALL WELL AND GOOD--BUT IF NOT...
THE CONCLAVE HAS MANY ENTERPRISES THAT WOULD BE JEOPARDIZED BY OUTSIDE USE OF THAT COMPOUND...
THUS, IF WE CAN'T HAVE IT, NOBODY WILL!
THE HOLLANDS AND THEIR FORMULA MUST BE DESTROYED!

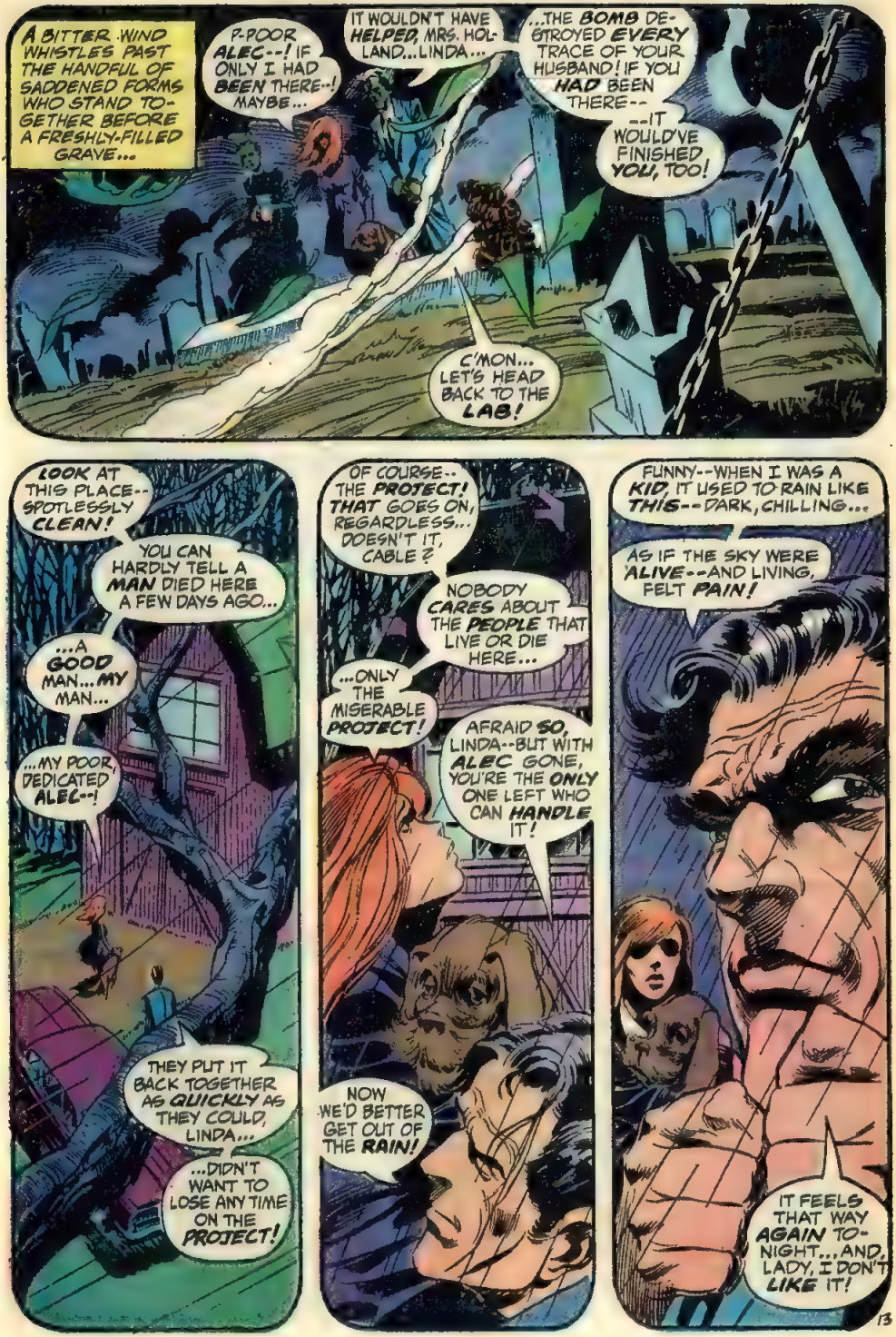

BUT WHEN FERRETT AND HIS COHORTS ATTEMPT TO RENEW THEIR OFFER...
BUT, DR. HOLLAND--WE CAME TO YOU IN GOOD FAITH!
SAVE IT FOR THE BOYS IN BLUE, FERRETT!
MY WIFE AND I'LL SLEEP A LOT BETTER--KNOWING YOU THREE ARE BEHIND BARS!
SORRY WE CAN'T ACCOMMODATE YOU, DOC!
BRUNO--TAKE HIM!
WOK!
UUNNGG!
HE WILL NOT BOTHER US, FERRETT.
SWELL! THEN WE CAN PLANT OUR LITTLE "SURPRISE PACKAGE"...
...AN' GET THE HECK AWAY FROM THIS DUMP!
AGREED! I WANT TO BE MILES FROM HERE WHEN OUR GRACIOUS GIFT BLOWS!
FOR A TIME, DARKNESS REIGNS--AND WHEN DR. ALEC HOLLAND CRAWLS OUT OF THE SHADOWLAND AT LAST...
UUNHH... FEELS LIKE THEY DROPPED A MOUNTAIN ON MY HEAD! THEY'VE...
HEY, SEEMS MY PLAYMATES HAVE DECIDED TO SKIP OUT!
OH... MY DEAR GOD!
THAT THING IS--TICKING!
I WONDER WHY THEY...
TICK TICK TICK TICK
GOTTA TRY TO DEFUSE IT BEFORE...
CRACK!
SLICK

BWAROOOOMM!

IMAGINE PAIN--SO INTENSE IT DEFIES DESCRIPTION--AS COUNTLESS UNCLASSIFIED CHEMICALS SEEP DEEP INTO THROBBING, FUME-ENVELOPED FLESH...
OH, MY GOD...
OH, MY DEAR, DEAR GOD--!

IMAGINE WHAT SUCH TERRIBLE SUFFERING CAN DO TO THE FRAGILE MIND...
...AS IT DRIVES THE STRICKEN BODY FORWARD, CLAWING DESPERATELY AT THE COOL NIGHT AIR IN HOPES OF SOME SMALL COMFORT...

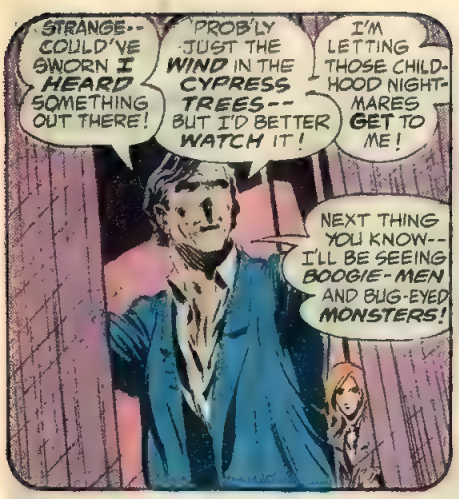

IMAGINE RELIEF--AS THE SMOLDERING MAN-SHAPE REACHES THE SOOTHING WATERS OF THE EVER-PRESENT BOG...
HSSSSS!
...THEN DISAPPEARS SOUNDLESSLY BENEATH ITS BUBBLING SURFACE...


A BITTER WIND WHISTLES PAST THE HANDFUL OF SADDENED FORMS WHO STAND TOGETHER BEFORE A FRESHLY-FILLED GRAVE...
P-POOR ALEC--! IF ONLY I HAD BEEN THERE--! MAYBE...
IT WOULDN'T HAVE HELPED, MRS. HOLLAND... LINDA...
...THE BOMB DESTROYED EVERY TRACE OF YOUR HUSBAND! IF YOU HAD BEEN THERE--
--IT WOULD'VE FINISHED YOU, TOO!
C'MON... LET'S HEAD BACK TO THE LAB!
LOOK AT THIS PLACE--SPOTLESSLY CLEAN!
YOU CAN HARDLY TELL A MAN DIED HERE A FEW DAYS AGO...
...A GOOD MAN... MY MAN...
...MY POOR, DEDICATED ALEC--!
THEY PUT IT BACK TOGETHER AS QUICKLY AS THEY COULD, LINDA...
...DIDN'T WANT TO LOSE ANY TIME ON THE PROJECT!
OF COURSE--THE PROJECT! THAT GOES ON, REGARDLESS... DOESN'T IT, CABLE?
NOBODY CARES ABOUT THE PEOPLE THAT LIVE OR DIE HERE...
...ONLY THE MISERABLE PROJECT!
AFRAID SO, LINDA--BUT WITH ALEC GONE, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE LEFT WHO CAN HANDLE IT!
NOW WE'D BETTER GET OUT OF THE RAIN!
FUNNY--WHEN I WAS A KID, IT USED TO RAIN LIKE THIS--DARK, CHILLING...
AS IF THE SKY WERE ALIVE--AND LIVING, FELT PAIN!
IT FEELS THAT WAY AGAIN TONIGHT... AND, LADY, I DON'T LIKE IT!

RAIN: SOME SAY IT CLEANSES THE ALL-TOO-IMPURE EARTH--OTHERS PROCLAIM IT THE SORROW OF THE GODS, REGRETTING THE TRAGEDY THEIR GOLDEN HANDS HAVE WROUGHT...
...THE TRAGEDY THAT HAS LONG BEEN KNOWN AS MAN!
BUT THOSE WHO DWELL IN THIS TIMELESS LAND CARE NOT FOR IDLE OPINION. THEY ARE CONTENTED TO BASK IN THE TEEMING TORRENT...
...UNTIL SOMETHING SUDDEN DISTURBS THEIR REPOSE...
...SOMETHING THAT CLAWS ITS WAY OUT OF THE GRASPING MIRE...
...AND INTO THE LIGHT ONCE MORE!
SOMETHING THAT PULLS ITSELF UPRIGHT ON UNSTEADY LEGS, SEARCHING ITS CLOUDY MIND FOR A FRAGMENT OF MEMORY...
...THEN PAUSES, STUDYING ITS GNARLED MISSHAPEN HANDS... EXAMINING THE CLUSTERS OF ROOT, THE CRUMBLING CHUNKS OF MOSS...

...AND IN THAT FRIGHTENING, MIND-SHATTERING SECOND-- KNOWS WHAT IT HAS BECOME!
A MUCK-ENCRUSTED, SHAMBLING MOCKERY OF LIFE... A TWISTED CARICATURE OF HUMANITY THAT CAN ONLY BE CALLED...
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

SWAMP THING!
BUT TRAVESTY THOUGH IT MAY BE, THE CREATURE BREATHES--AND THINKS...
MUST BE LOGICAL... MUST GATHER MY THOUGHTS...
EXPLOSION SHOULD HAVE KILLED ME... IT DIDN'T!
WHY? WHY?
THE FORMULA... BIO-RESTORATIVE... ON THE TABLE WHEN IT BLEW...
...CHEMICAL MINGLED WITH MY FLESH... RE-ACTED WITH SWAMP OOZE...
...I SAID IT COULD MAKE FORESTS OUT OF DESERTS... AND IT DID... IT DID...
...TURNED ME INTO... INTO... WHAT?
THE LAB... STILL STANDS... AND LIGHTS ARE ON...
LINDA WILL BE THERE... SHE'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO...
...SHE'LL... HELP ME...
DETERMINEDLY, THE MONSTROSITY LUMBERS CLOSER TO THE BARN--CLOSE ENOUGH TO SEE...
THAT REFLECTION IN THE GLASS... CAN'T BE... CAN'T BE...
AARGH!


STRANGE--COULD'VE SWORN I HEARD SOMETHING OUT THERE!
PROB'LY JUST THE WIND IN THE CYPRESS TREES--BUT I'D BETTER WATCH IT!
I'M LETTING THOSE CHILDHOOD NIGHTMARES GET TO ME!
NEXT THING YOU KNOW--I'LL BE SEEING BOOGIE-MEN AND BUG-EYED MONSTERS!

COULDN'T LET LINDA SEE ME... NOT THE WAY I AM!
...BETTER TO STAY IN THE SHADOWS... AND KEEP WATCH ON THE HOUSE!

THEY WILL BE BACK... THE ONES WHO THOUGHT THEY KILLED ME...
...FERRETT AND THE OTHERS WILL BE BACK...
...AND I WILL BE WAITING!

WAIT--WAIT!! YOU SILLY DOG--COME BACK HERE! OHHHH--!
SAVE YOUR BREATH, LINDA--IT CAN'T HEAR YOU! GOT A FLEA IN ITS EAR, I GUESS!
I'LL GO FETCH IT--BUT I WANT YOU TO BOLT THE DOOR BEHIND ME WHILE I'M GONE!
RUN, DOG--FOLLOW YOUR MASTER'S VOICE--!

UNAWARE OF THE SILENT COMMANDS DRAWING THE HOUND ONWARD, MATT CABLE MOVES THROUGH THE DOWNPOUR IN DETERMINED PURSUIT...
YOU STUPID MUTT--WHERE ARE YOU?
COME BACK HERE BEFORE YOU KILL YOURSELF!
THERE ARE BOGS IN THIS AREA! THEY...

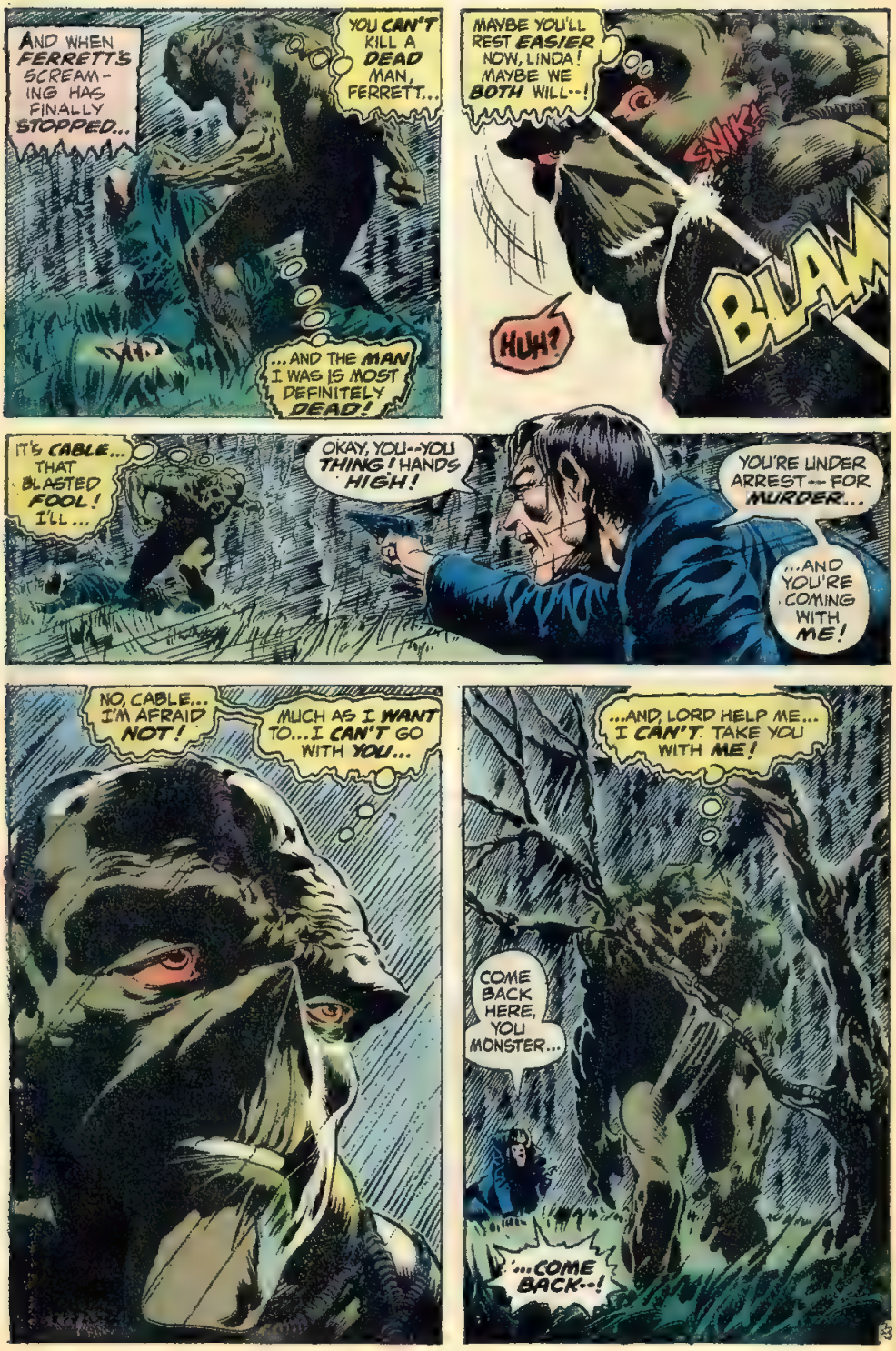
LISTEN TO ME-- TRYING TO RATIONALIZE WITH A DOG! I'M GOING...
SNAG!
HUH?
UNLESS THAT POOCH HAS STARTED WEARING SIZE 12 WORK-SHOES, THERE'S SOMEBODY PROWLING AROUND THE LAB...
...AND IF I FIGURE TO EARN MY SALARY, I'D BETTER FIND OUT WHO IT IS!
BUT AS THE SECURITY OFFICER RETURNS TO THE LAB...
CRAK!
SORRY, MISTER-- BUT BRUNO HAS HIS ORDERS!
THAT NOISE-- OUTSIDE--!
CABLE, IS THAT YOU? DID YOU FIND THE DOG?
WHO--?
KRUMP!
AFRAID YOUR FRIEND ISN'T GONNA BE FINDING ANY-THING FOR A WHILE, LITTLE LADY! BUT THAT'S OKAY...
...BECAUSE RIGHT NOW, YOU AND I HAVE THINGS TO DISCUSS...
...ALONE! HEH, HEH, HEH...

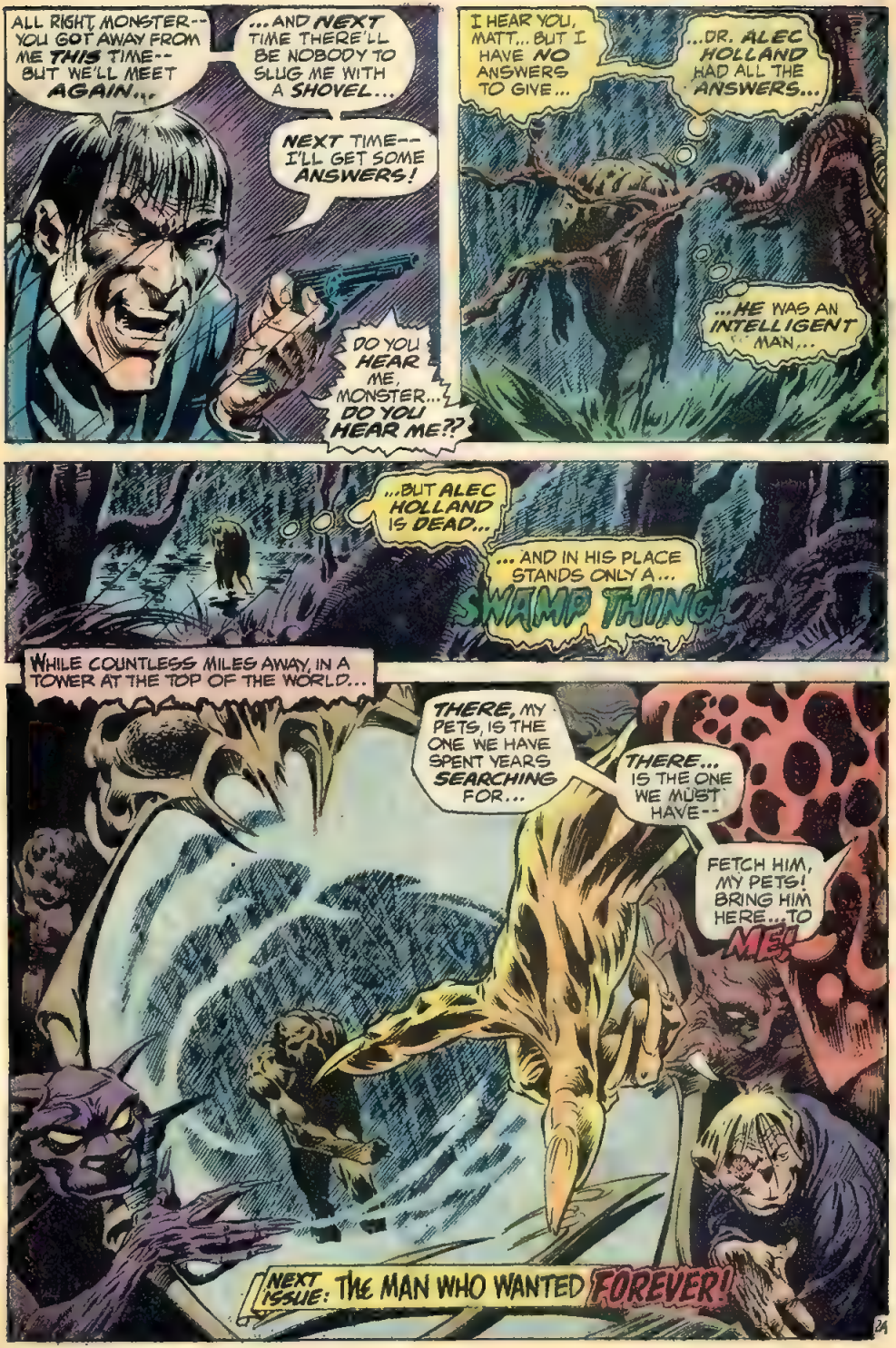
...ALONE... IS THERE A MORE TERRIBLE WORD? ALL THIS WAIT-ING... ALONE... NO ONE TO TALK TO...
...IF I CAN TALK, THAT IS! I WONDER IF...
AWWOOOO
THERE'S... SOMETHING OUT THERE... IN THE BOO...
LINDA'S DOG... SINKING IN THE MIRE...!
HOLD ON, LITTLE ONE... I'LL GET YOU OUT...!
YIP! YIP!
BLAM!!
WOULDN'T WANT LINDA TO LOSE YOU, TOO! SHE'D...
NOOOO!
LINDA... MY LINDA... IF THEY'VE HURT YOU...
THE LAB... GOT TO GET BACK TO THE LAB...
...MAYBE IT'S NOT TOO LATE...
BUT WHEN THE SHAMBLING MONSTROSITY BURSTS INTO THE SILENT STRUCTURE...
LINDA!

LINDA... LINDA... IT'S MY FAULT... MY FAULT...
...IF ONLY I HADN'T GONE FOR THE DOG... IF I HADN'T TURNED AWAY!
THEN THE ROAR OF AN AUTO-MOBILE CHURNING DOWN THE ROAD CUTS THROUGH THE SILENCE...
...AND THE MASSIVE MAN-MONSTER ANSWERS ITS GROWLING CALL...
KAWRAAAW!
STOP!
F-F-FERRETT--! WHAT IS THAT THING?
DON'T ASK ME, BRUNO--JUST RUN IT DOWN!
STOP!
I SAID...
10

CONTINUED ON 2nd PAGE FOLLOWING

THEM AGAIN... FERRETT AND HIS FRIEND...
...THE ONES WHO KILLED ME...AND MY LINDA...
THAT MONSTER'S NOT HUMAN...NOT HUMAN!!
NOT HUMAN? NO...I'M NOT...
...AND YOU ARE THE ONES WHO MADE ME THAT WAY...
NO... NO--!!
FRAGILE BONE AND CARTILAGE SHATTER BENEATH THE WEIGHT OF A MOSS-ENCRUSTED FIST AND...
IT'S FINISHED BRUNO... BUT IT WON'T GET ME!
ALL RIGHT, YOU FILTHY MONSTER--TURN AROUND AND FACE ME!
I WANT TO SEE THE LOOK IN YOUR EYES WHEN YOU--DIE!!
BLAM!
C'MON, MONSTER--DIE!!
WHY WON'T YOU DIE?
BLAM! BLAM!
DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE!
BLAM! BLAM!
CLICK!
OH... MY... GOD...


AND WHEN FERRETT'S SCREAMING HAS FINALLY STOPPED...
YOU CAN'T KILL A DEAD MAN, FERRETT...
...AND THE MAN I WAS IS MOST DEFINITELY DEAD!
MAYBE YOU'LL REST EASIER NOW, LINDA! MAYBE WE BOTH WILL--!
SNIK!
BLAM
HUH?
IT'S CABLE... THAT BLASTED FOOL! I'LL...
OKAY, YOU--YOU THING! HANDS HIGH!
YOU'RE UNDER ARREST--FOR MURDER...
...AND YOU'RE COMING WITH ME!
NO, CABLE... I'M AFRAID NOT!
MUCH AS I WANT TO...I CAN'T GO WITH YOU...
...AND, LORD HELP ME... I CAN'T TAKE YOU WITH ME!
COME BACK HERE, YOU MONSTER...
...COME BACK--!


ALL RIGHT, MONSTER-- YOU GOT AWAY FROM ME THIS TIME-- BUT WE'LL MEET AGAIN...
...AND NEXT TIME THERE'LL BE NOBODY TO SLUG ME WITH A SHOVEL...
NEXT TIME-- I'LL GET SOME ANSWERS!
DO YOU HEAR ME, MONSTER... DO YOU HEAR ME??
I HEAR YOU, MATT... BUT I HAVE NO ANSWERS TO GIVE...
...DR. ALEC HOLLAND HAD ALL THE ANSWERS...
...HE WAS AN INTELLIGENT MAN...
...BUT ALEC HOLLAND IS DEAD...
...AND IN HIS PLACE STANDS ONLY A... SWAMP THING!
WHILE COUNTLESS MILES AWAY, IN A TOWER AT THE TOP OF THE WORLD...
THERE, MY PETS, IS THE ONE WE HAVE SPENT YEARS SEARCHING FOR...
THERE... IS THE ONE WE MUST HAVE--
FETCH HIM, MY PETS! BRING HIM HERE...TO ME!
NEXT ISSUE: THE MAN WHO WANTED FOREVER!

SECOND STARTLING ISSUE
SWAMP
DC
THING
20¢
SWAMP THING
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NO. 2
JAN.
BRIGHTBOAD

AGAIN--THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING!

THE MAN WHO WANTED FOREVER

A LEN WEIN-BERNI WRIGHTSON-JOE ORLANDO PRESENTATION.

RAIN, 'TIS SAID, CAN WASH AWAY THE PAST--COVER OVER MEMORIES WITH A BITTERSWEET, GLISTENING HAZE...
FOR THE GROTESQUE FIGURE WHO CROUCHES IN THE SHADOWS, WATCHING GRIMLY AS TWO BROKEN BODIES ARE SILENTLY CARRIED AWAY, THE SUDDEN STORM HAS ENDED FAR TOO SOON...
...FOR THE MEMORIES LINGER... AND THEY BURN...
LORD, HOW THEY BURN!
J-1796

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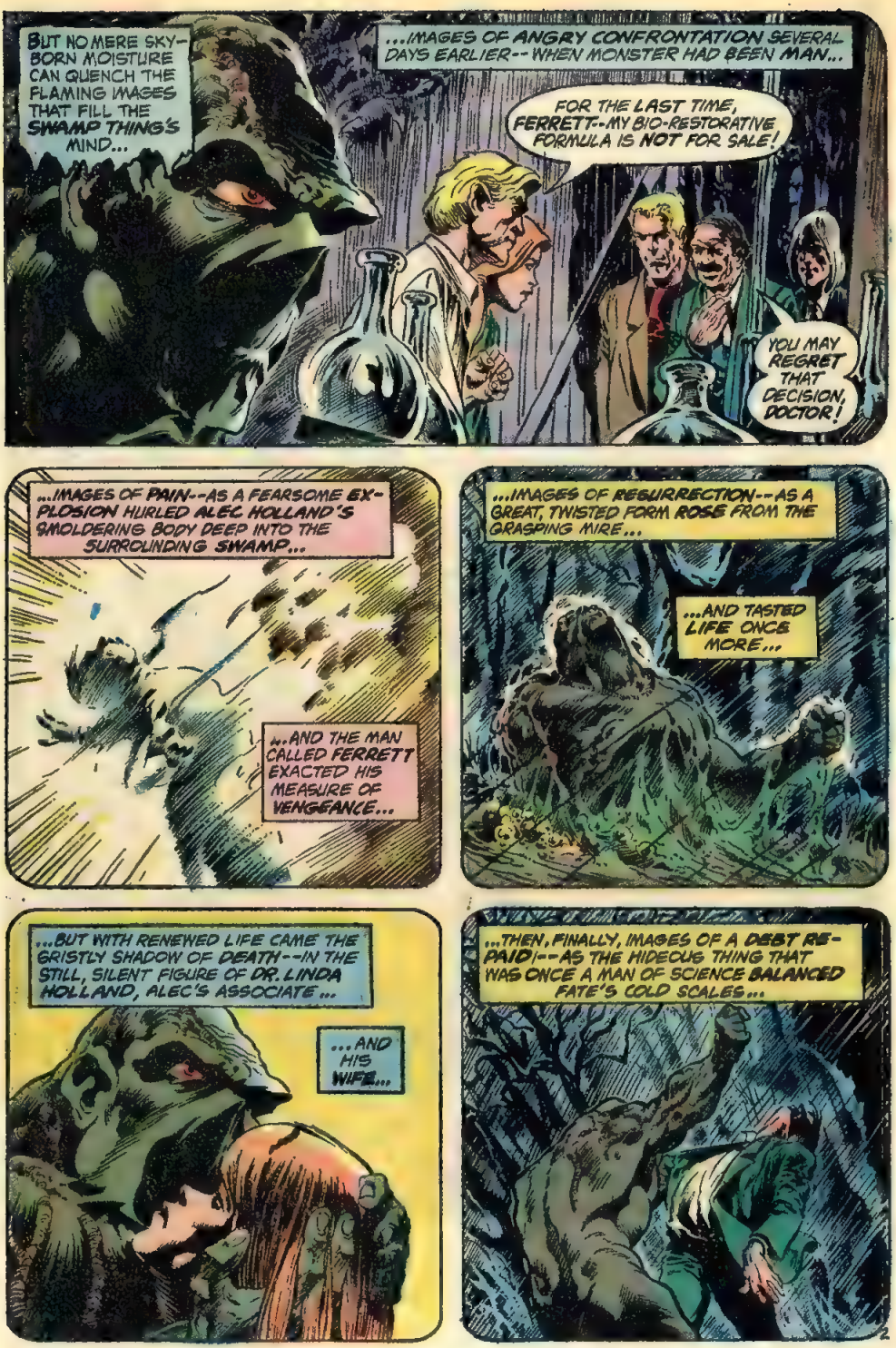
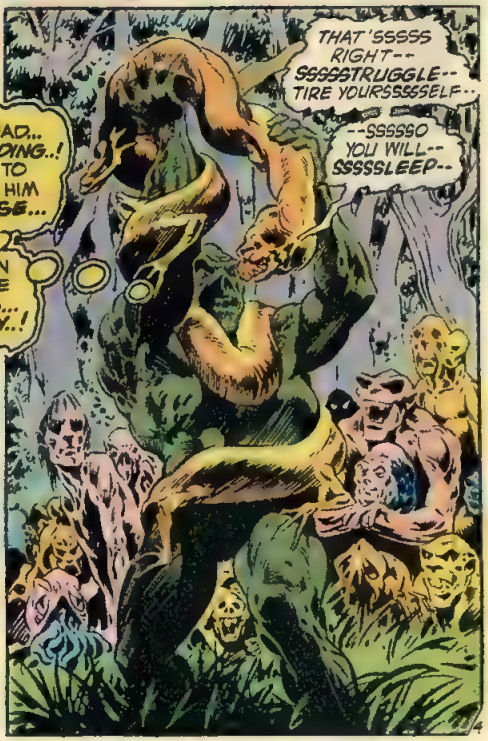

BUT NO MERE SKY-BORN MOISTURE CAN QUENCH THE FLAMING IMAGES THAT FILL THE SWAMP THING'S MIND...
...IMAGES OF ANGRY CONFRONTATION SEVERAL DAYS EARLIER--WHEN MONSTER HAD BEEN MAN...
FOR THE LAST TIME, FERRETT--MY BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA IS NOT FOR SALE!
YOU MAY REGRET THAT DECISION, DOCTOR!
...IMAGES OF PAIN--AS A FEARSOME EXPLOSION HURLED ALEC HOLLAND'S SMOLDERING BODY DEEP INTO THE SURROUNDING SWAMP...
...AND THE MAN CALLED FERRETT EXACTED HIS MEASURE OF VENGEANCE...
...IMAGES OF RESURRECTION--AS A GREAT, TWISTED FORM ROSE FROM THE GRASPING MIRE...
...AND TASTED LIFE ONCE MORE...
...BUT WITH RENEWED LIFE CAME THE GRISTLY SHADOW OF DEATH--IN THE STILL, SILENT FIGURE OF DR. LINDA HOLLAND, ALEC'S ASSOCIATE...
...AND HIS WIFE...
...THEN, FINALLY, IMAGES OF A DEBT RE-PAID!--AS THE HIDEOUS THING THAT WAS ONCE A MAN OF SCIENCE BALANCED FATE'S COLD SCALES...

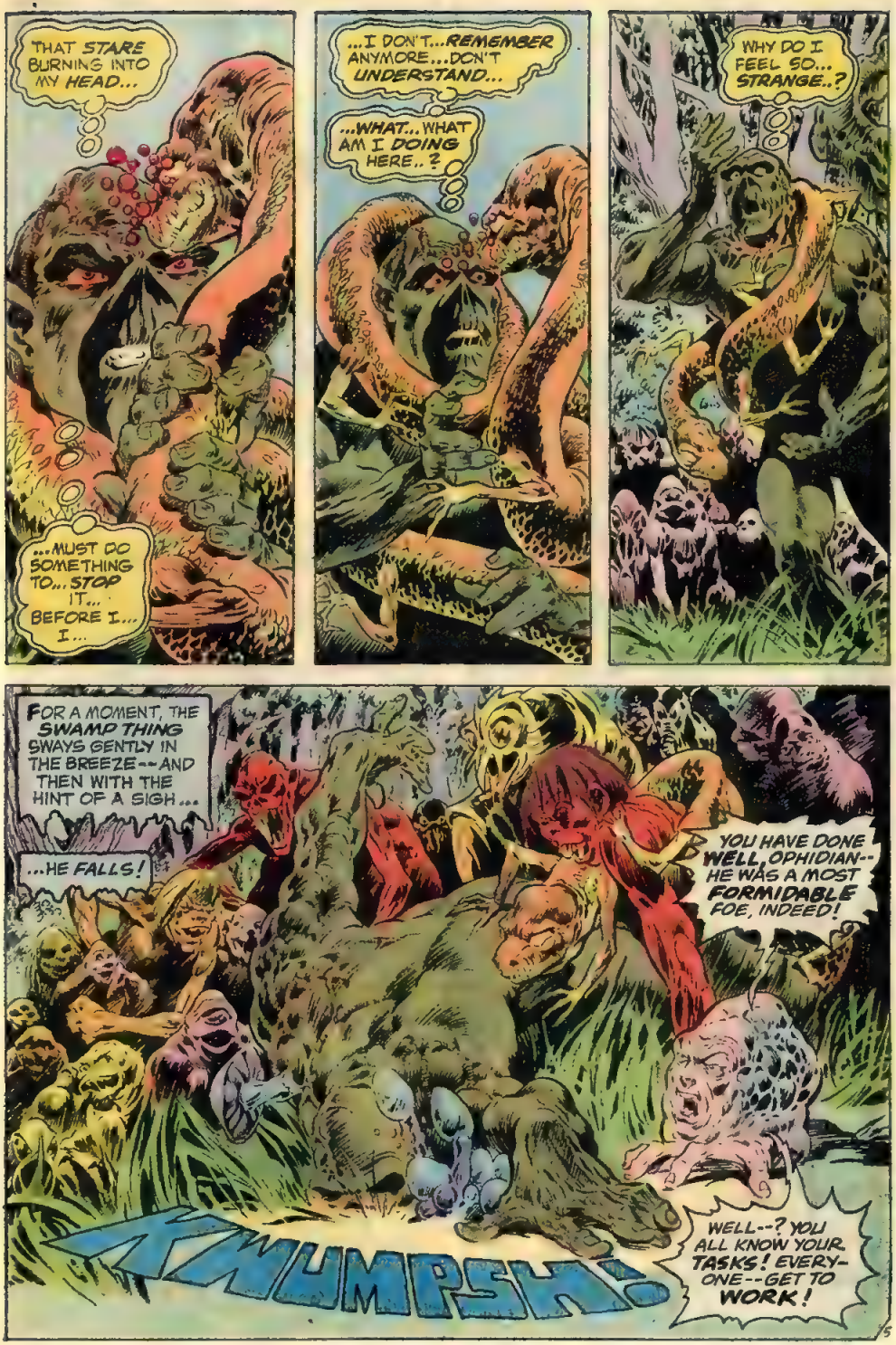
IT'S OVER, LITTLE ONE..! FERRETT AND BRUNO WILL NEVER...HURT ANYONE AGAIN!
THEIR HELL IS ENDED... WHILE MINE...
...MINE IS JUST... BEGINNING..!
COME, LITTLE ONE...THERE IS NOTHING LEFT FOR US HERE...
...NOTHING LEFT FOR ME...ANYWHERE..!
ONLY SILENCE... COLD, UNENDING SILENCE..!
THEN, SUDDENLY, THE SILENCE HAS HANDS-- AND TALONS, CLUTCHING TENDRILS, SLICK-SCALED CLAWS...
...IT WRITHES IN COUNTLESS UN-HUMAN SHAPES THAT DROP FROM THE TOWERING TREETOPS LIKE A DEMONIC RAIN...
...COVERING THE MASSIVE MAN-MONSTER WITH A BLANKET OF SYNTHETIC FLESH...
SWIFTLY, MY UN-MEN-- CAPTURE HIM SWIFTLY!
THE MASTER WILL NOT TOLERATE YOUR FAILURE!

DON'T KNOW WHAT THESE THINGS ARE... OR WHAT THEY WANT...
...AND I DON'T CARE TO... FIND OUT..!
JUST WANT THEM TO... LEAVE ME ALONE..!

HE DISCARDS THEM ALL LIKE SO MUCH CHAFF! BUT THERE IS STILL ONE LEFT TO CALL--!
OPHIDIAN-- YOUR BROTHERS HAVE NEED OF YOU!
YESSSSS, CRANIUSSSSS-- OPHIDIAN COMESSSSS!

SWIFTLY, THE CREATURE CALLED OPHIDIAN UNDULATES ITS SERPENTINE BODY ACROSS THE MOSS-DAMP MIRE AND...
MY HEAD... POUNDING..! GOT TO TEAR HIM LOOSE...
...TURN THOSE EYES... AWAY..!
LOOK--LOOK AT ME! GAZE INTO OPHIDIAN'SSSSS EYESSSSS!


THAT'SSSSS RIGHT-- SSSSSTRUGGLE-- TIRE YOURSSSSELF--
--SSSSSO YOU WILL-- SSSSSLEEP--


THAT STARE BURNING INTO MY HEAD...
...MUST DO SOMETHING TO... STOP IT... BEFORE I... I...
...I DON'T...REMEMBER ANYMORE...DON'T UNDERSTAND...
...WHAT... WHAT AM I DOING HERE..?
WHY DO I FEEL SO... STRANGE..?
FOR A MOMENT, THE SWAMP THING SWAYS GENTLY IN THE BREEZE--AND THEN WITH THE HINT OF A SIGH...
...HE FALLS!
KTHUMPSH!
YOU HAVE DONE WELL, OPHIDIAN--HE WAS A MOST FORMIDABLE FOE, INDEED!
WELL--? YOU ALL KNOW YOUR TASKS! EVERY-ONE--GET TO WORK!
5

MOMENTS LATER--A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY...
HEAR WHAT, LT. CABLE? ALL I HEAR 'ROUND THIS BOG IS--BULLFROGS!
HEY--DID YOU HEAR THAT?
NO--NOTHING LIVING--MORE LIKE AN ENGINE... A BOAT, MAYBE!
YEAH--I HEAR IT NOW--
--BUT THAT AIN'T NO BOAT!
SOUNDS MORE LIKE..
--AN AIRPLANE!
M-MY GOD, CABLE...THERE'S SOMETHING CHAINED TO THE UNDERCARRIAGE OF THAT JOB...
...SOMETHING HUMAN!
WHATEVER THAT IS, MIKE--IT'S NOT HUMAN!
THAT'S THE MONSTER THAT CLOBBERED ME AND KILLED THOSE TWO..
YIP YIP!
WHA--? LINDA'S MUTT--!
AT LEAST, THAT... THAT THING DIDN'T GET YOU!
MAN, SHE'S OUT OF RANGE ALREADY--HEADING DUE EAST LIKE HER TAIL WERE ON FIRE!
WONDER WHERE THE HECK SHE'S GOING?
WELL, STOP WONDERING--AND FIND OUT!
SOMEHOW, THAT CREATURE IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF SEVERAL PEOPLE--
--AND I'M NOT GOING TO REST TILL I FIND IT... AND FINISH IT OFF!
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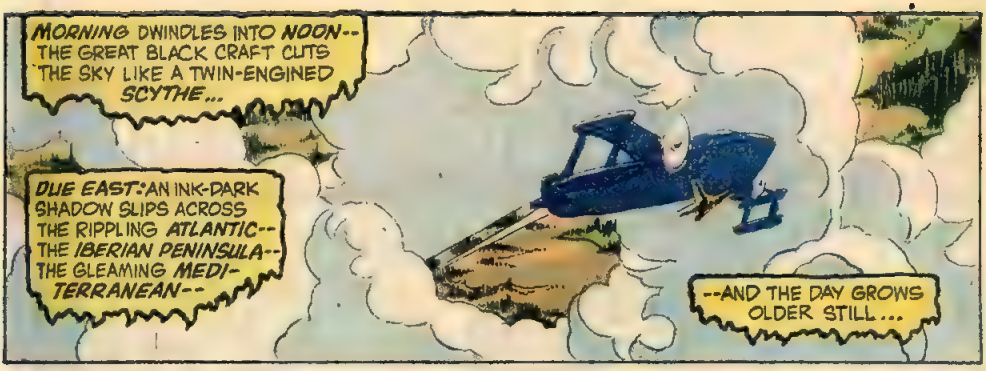
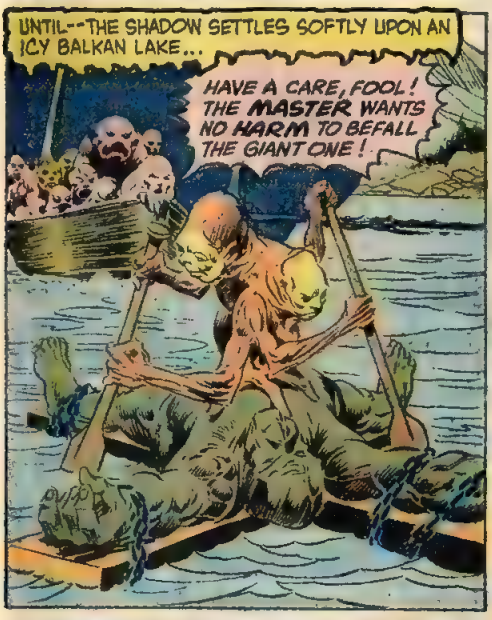
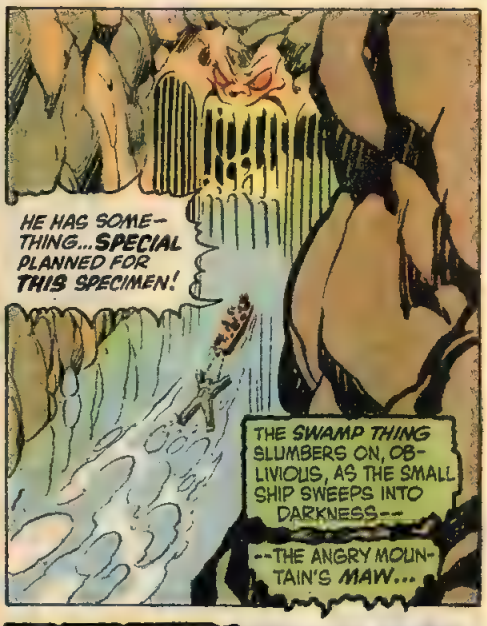
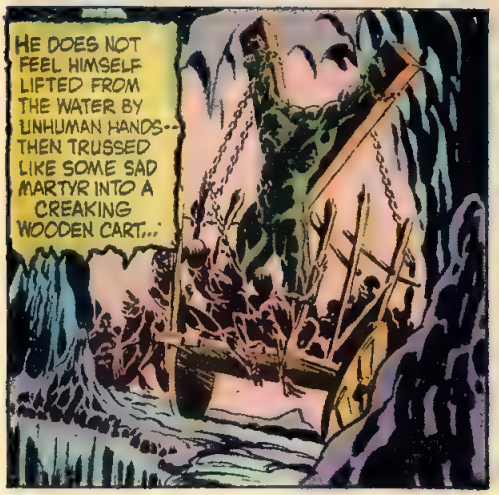

MORNING DWINDLES INTO NOON--THE GREAT BLACK CRAFT CUTS THE SKY LIKE A TWIN-ENGINED SCYTHE...
DUE EAST: AN INK-DARK SHADOW SLIPS ACROSS THE RIPPLING ATLANTIC--THE IBERIAN PENINSULA--THE GLEAMING MEDITERRANEAN--
--AND THE DAY GROWS OLDER STILL...


UNTIL--THE SHADOW SETTLES SOFTLY UPON AN ICY BALKAN LAKE...
HAVE A CARE, FOOL! THE MASTER WANTS NO HARM TO BEFALL THE GIANT ONE!


HE HAS SOMETHING...SPECIAL PLANNED FOR THIS SPECIMEN!
THE SWAMP THING SLUMBERS ON, OBLIVIOUS, AS THE SMALL SHIP SWEEPS INTO DARKNESS--
--THE ANGRY MOUNTAIN'S MAW...


HE DOES NOT FEEL HIMSELF LIFTED FROM THE WATER BY UNHUMAN HANDS--THEN TRUSSED LIKE SOME SAD MARTYR INTO A CREAKING WOODEN CART...

HE IS NOT BOTHERED BY THE PERSISTANT JOUNCE AND CLATTER--AS HE IS DRAGGED DOWN TIMEWORN TUNNELS THAT TWIST THROUGH THE MOUNTAIN'S BREAST...

AND HE DOES NOT SEE THE CASTLE, REACHING GRIMLY FOR THE SKY--LOFTY SPIRES CLAWING AT THE CLOUDS LIKE TALONS TEARING GOSSAMER--DIM-LIT WINDOWS PEERING DOWN LIKE RHEUMY YELLOW EYES...
PULL, MY BROTHERS-- PULL! WE ARE ALMOST HOME!
ALL THIS IS BEYOND THE MAN-MONSTER'S NOTICE AS HE SLEEPS HIS DREAMLESS SLEEP...
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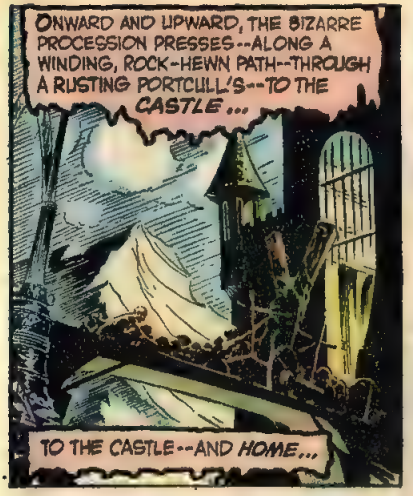

ONWARD AND UPWARD, THE BIZARRE PROCESSION PRESSES--ALONG A WINDING, ROCK-HEWN PATH--THROUGH A RUSTING PORTCULL'S--TO THE CASTLE...
TO THE CASTLE--AND HOME...

MOTION... THE FLICKER OF A MOSS-LIDDED EYE...

...AND THE SWAMP THING--AWAKENS!
SNAKPT
SNAKPT!

CHAINED... THEY HAD ME CHAINED..!
THE SCENERY IS DIFFERENT... BUT THE SITUATION IS THE SAME..!

HOW MANY OF THEM... ARE THERE?
FOR EACH ONE THAT FALLS... TWO OTHERS TAKE ITS PLACE!
MUST BE A WAY OUT OF HERE... BUT WHERE... WHERE?

THAT WINDOW..! MAY BE... MY ONLY HOPE..!
CAN'T KEEP... FIGHTING THESE THINGS... FOREVER..!

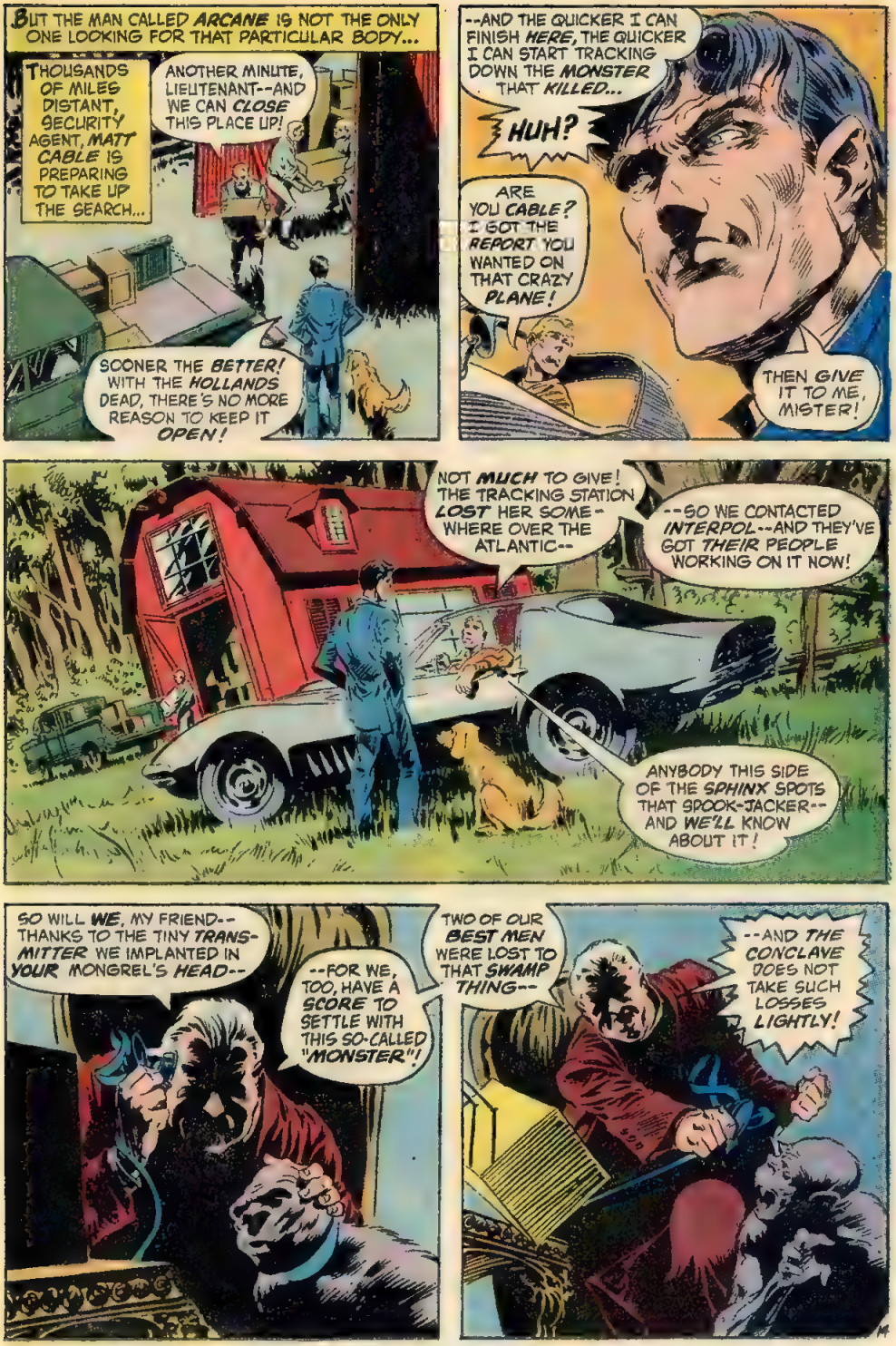
HAVE TO GET AWAY... COLLECT MY THOUGHTS...
...DISCOVER WHERE I AM... BEFORE...
NO!!

REALLY DID IT... THIS TIME..!
BUT I'LL TAKE THESE...GOBLINS WITH ME...WHEN I GO!
NO PLACE LEFT... FOR ME TO TURN..!
THEY GIBBER AS THEY COME, THESE STRANGE SYNTHETIC BEINGS--AND THEY SPILL OVER THE MISSHAPEN MAN-MONSTER LIKE A WRITHING TIDE, GRASPING, CLUTCHING...
...UNTIL A VOICE LIKE FRACTURED CRYSTAL RINGS THROUGH THE COOL, CRISP AIR...
NOW, NOW, MY PETS--YOU SHOULDN'T BE SO ROUGH WITH YOUR NEW PLAYMATE!
WHO--?
I CAN READ THE QUESTION IN YOUR EYES, DEAR BOY...
MY NAME IS--ARCANE!!
REALLY, MY YOUNG FRIEND-- YOU NEEDN'T LOOK SO DEFENSIVE--
--I ASSURE YOU, MY "PETS" ARE QUITE HARMLESS!
NOW PLEASE-- TAKE MY HAND!
LET ME HELP YOU--INSIDE!

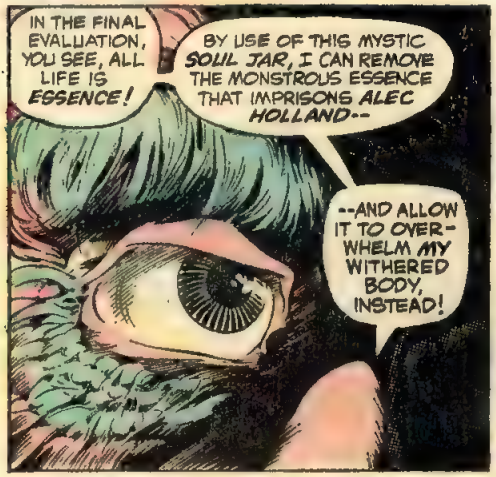
MOVEMENTS ECHO ALONG COBBLED CORRIDORS, STRANGE, UNFAMILIAR...
THE SOFT TREAD OF FEET GONE WITHERED WITH AGE...
THE MUCK-WET SHUFFLE OF LEGS NO LONGER HUMAN...
FORGIVE MY MANNER OF SUMMONING YOU, MY FRIEND--
--BUT I COULD NOT CHANCE YOUR REFUSING MY INVITATION!
YOU SEE, I HAVE A PROPOSITION TO MAKE YOU--A MOST UNUSUAL PROPOSITION, INDEED!
I AM OLD, MY BOY, FRIGHTFULLY OLD--
--BUT I HAVE LEARNED MANY THINGS IN MY TIME UPON THIS EARTH--OCCULT ENCHANTMENTS--SUPERNATURAL LORE!
I KNOW THE SECRET OF IMMORTALITY, FOR EXAMPLE--
BUT IT IS A SECRET I DARE NOT PUT TO USE--WHILE I STILL INHABIT THIS BENT AND WIZENED FORM!
USING MY GATHERED KNOWLEDGE, I SOUGHT TO BUILD MYSELF A NEW, MORE ENDURING FORM, SYNTHETICALLY!
MY UN-MEN ARE THE RESULT OF MY FIRST EXPERIMENTATIONS--CRUDE, BUT TOTALLY DEDICATED TO ME!
I'M AFRAID I DID NOT FARE AS WELL WITH MY LATER CREATIONS!
THE BODIES, YOU WILL NOTICE, ARE MORE HUMAN IN FORM--BUT THE MINDS ARE NEARLY USELESS!
I KEEP THE POOR, ARTIFICIAL THINGS CONTAINED DOWN HERE--TO PREVENT THEM FROM DOING ANY ACCIDENTAL HARM!

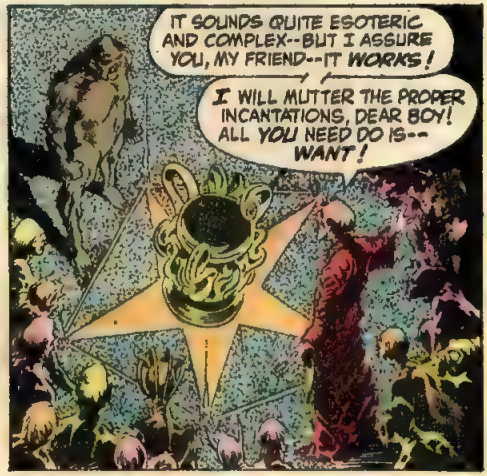
I'D ALMOST GIVEN UP HOPE OF OBTAINING THE NECESSARY BODY--WHEN I CHANCED TO SPY YOU IN THIS ANCIENT MYSTIC MIRROR!
I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU--THE EXPERIMENTS--THE EXPLOSION--THE MURDER OF YOUR WIFE!
--AND THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN DO TO HELP YOU!
HOW WOULD YOU LIKE TO BE HUMAN ONCE AGAIN--DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND?
BELIEVE ME, MY FRIEND--I AM MOST ERNEST!
I HAVE THE ABILITY TO RID YOU OF THIS MONSTROUS FORM--PERMANENTLY!
IT'S A SIMPLE PROCESS, ACTUALLY--BUT I MUST HAVE YOUR COMPLETE COOPERATION!
WELL, DOCTOR HOLLAND--? WHAT DO YOU SAY? HAVE WE A DEAL?
DOCTOR HOLLAND--? WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, MAN?
DON'T YOU WANT TO BE HUMAN?
DON'T YOU CARE?
I... CARE!!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.
12

SOON--IN A CAVERNOUS LABORATORY DEEP WITHIN THE CASTLE WALLS...
BEFORE WE CAN PROCEED, DR. HOLLAND, WE MUST KNOW MORE ABOUT YOUR--eh--CONDITION! VITAL STATISTICS AND SUCH, YOU UNDERSTAND!
MMMM--HEIGHT, 89 INCHES--WEIGHT, 547 POUNDS--APPARENTLY ALL MUSCLE!
WE'D BEST CHECK YOUR RESPIRATION AND BLOOD PRESSURE NEXT!
WHY--Y-YOU HAVE NO BLOOD PRESSURE--
--AND YOUR RESPIRATION--LIKE THAT OF A PLANT! YOU BREATHE IN CARBON DIOXIDE--AND EXHALE OXYGEN!
YOUR BODY, IT SEEMS, IS EQUALLY PLANT-LIKE! THERE ARE SEVERAL BULLETS LODGED INSIDE YOU--IN PLACES THAT WOULD BE FATAL TO ANYONE ELSE!
REMARKABLE, MY BOY--I MUST INVESTIGATE FURTHER!
ASTONISHING! THOSE ROOTS COVERING YOUR BODY--ARE ALIVE!
THEY MOVE OF THEIR OWN ACCORD!
YES, DOCTOR HOLLAND--I WOULD SAY YOUR BODY IS EXACTLY WHAT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR!

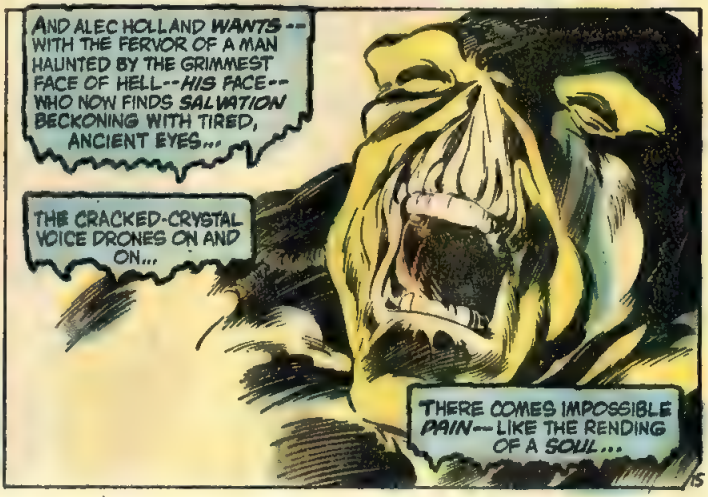

BUT THE MAN CALLED ARCANE IS NOT THE ONLY ONE LOOKING FOR THAT PARTICULAR BODY...
THOUSANDS OF MILES DISTANT, SECURITY AGENT, MATT CABLE IS PREPARING TO TAKE UP THE SEARCH...
ANOTHER MINUTE, LIEUTENANT--AND WE CAN CLOSE THIS PLACE UP!
SOONER THE BETTER! WITH THE HOLLANDS DEAD, THERE'S NO MORE REASON TO KEEP IT OPEN!
--AND THE QUICKER I CAN FINISH HERE, THE QUICKER I CAN START TRACKING DOWN THE MONSTER THAT KILLED...
HUH?
ARE YOU CABLE? I GOT THE REPORT YOU WANTED ON THAT CRAZY PLANE!
THEN GIVE IT TO ME, MISTER!
NOT MUCH TO GIVE! THE TRACKING STATION LOST HER SOME-WHERE OVER THE ATLANTIC--
--SO WE CONTACTED INTERPOL--AND THEY'VE GOT THEIR PEOPLE WORKING ON IT NOW!
ANYBODY THIS SIDE OF THE SPHINX SPOTS THAT SPOOK-JACKER--AND WE'LL KNOW ABOUT IT!
SO WILL WE, MY FRIEND--THANKS TO THE TINY TRANS-MITTER WE IMPLANTED IN YOUR MONGREL'S HEAD--
--FOR WE, TOO, HAVE A SCORE TO SETTLE WITH THIS SO-CALLED "MONSTER"!
TWO OF OUR BEST MEN WERE LOST TO THAT SWAMP THING--
--AND THE CONCLAVE DOES NOT TAKE SUCH LOSSES LIGHTLY!

THERE IT IS, DOCTOR,--THE LITTLE ITEM THAT SHALL MAKE YOU NORMAL ONCE AGAIN--
--BY TRANSFERRING THE GUISE OF THE SWAMP THING TO ME!


IN THE FINAL EVALUATION, YOU SEE, ALL LIFE IS ESSENCE!
BY USE OF THIS MYSTIC SOUL JAR, I CAN REMOVE THE MONSTROUS ESSENCE THAT IMPRISONS ALEC HOLLAND--
--AND ALLOW IT TO OVERWHELM MY WITHERED BODY, INSTEAD!

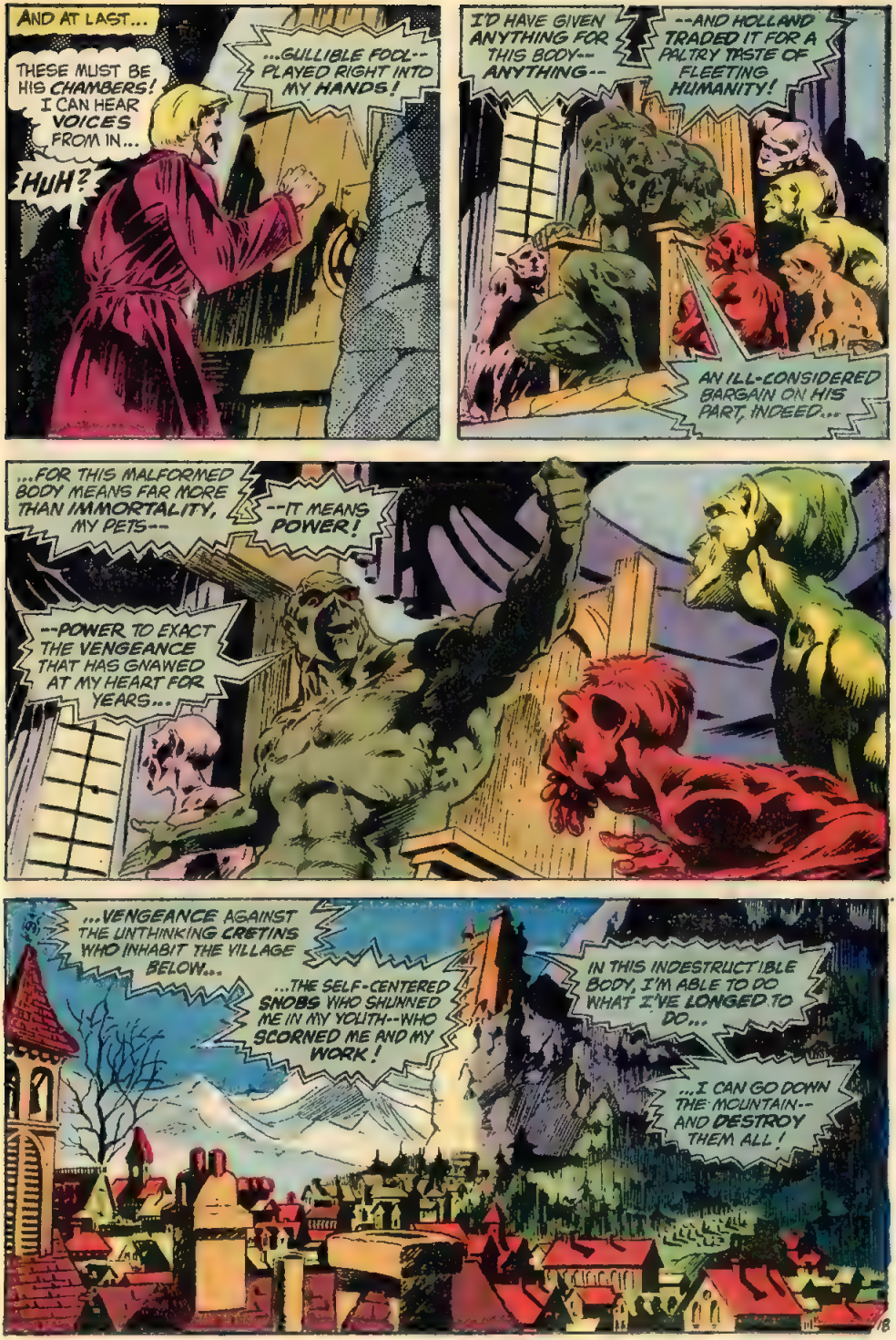

IT SOUNDS QUITE ESOTERIC AND COMPLEX--BUT I ASSURE YOU, MY FRIEND--IT WORKS!
I WILL MUTTER THE PROPER INCANTATIONS, DEAR BOY! ALL YOU NEED DO IS--WANT!

WANT TO BE RID OF THAT MOSS-BEGRIMED FORM AS YOU HAVE NEVER WANTED ANYTHING BEFORE!
WANT, MY SAD-EYED FRIEND--WANT--WANT--WANT!

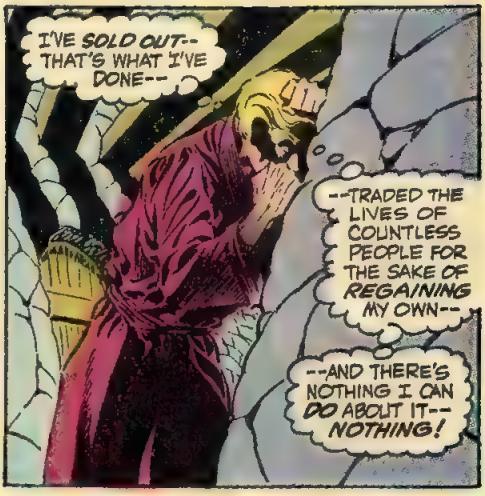

AND ALEC HOLLAND WANTS--WITH THE FERVOR OF A MAN HAUNTED BY THE GRIMMEST FACE OF HELL--HIS FACE--WHO NOW FINDS SALVATION BECKONING WITH TIRED, ANCIENT EYES...
THE CRACKED-CRYSTAL VOICE DRONES ON AND ON...
THERE COMES IMPOSSIBLE PAIN--LIKE THE RENDING OF A SOUL...

...AND A QUEASY ALEC HOLLAND WATCHES THE SWAMP THING CLAMP THE SOUL JAR TIGHT...
WH-WHAT HAPPENED--?
IT'S OVER, MY BOY--TAKE A LOOK AT YOURSELF!
DEAR GOD...I'M HUMAN!
M-MY ARMS... MY HANDS... THEY'RE NORMAL AGAIN!
AND SO YOU WILL REMAIN--PROVIDING THE ENCHANTMENT IS NOT DISTURBED!
COME--TAKE THIS ROBE...
...AND I'LL SHOW YOU TO MORE COMFORTABLE QUARTERS!
A BENEFICENT SIDE-EFFECT OF THE ENCHANTMENT, GOOD DOCTOR--BUT ENOUGH OF THAT FOR NOW!
YOU MUST BE TERRIBLY TIRED, MY BOY--! REST A WHILE--AND THEN WE'LL TALK!
YOUR VOICE--! IT WAS SO VERY DIFFICULT FOR ME TO MAKE THAT BODY SPEAK--!
HOW DO YOU MANAGE IT SO EASILY?

MOONLIGHT: FROM TIME IMMEMORIAL, IT HAS CHARTED THE COURSE OF LOVERS AND TIDES...
...BUT HE WHO BASKS IN ITS QUICKSILVER GLOW THIS NIGHT HAS LITTLE INTEREST IN SUCH CELESTIAL CONCERNS...
--HUMAN AGAIN! IT SEEMS TOO IMPOSSIBLE TO BE TRUE!
HUMAN AGAIN! TO BE ABLE TO SIT LIKE THIS--WITHOUT ANGER--WITHOUT FEAR...
I ONLY WISH LINDA COULD BE HERE TO SEE IT...
LORD--HOW I WISH LINDA COULD BE HERE!
I WONDER IF ARCANE KEEPS ANYTHING AROUND THIS PLACE TO DRINK?
RIGHT ABOUT NOW--I NEED ONE!
AND AS THE DISPIRITED DOCTOR MAKES HIS WAY THROUGH CALIGARIAN CORRIDORS...
WHAT SORT OF MADHOUSE IS THIS PLACE?
IT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PUT TOGETHER IN THE THROES OF SOME ARCHITECT'S NIGHTMARE--!


AND AT LAST...
THESE MUST BE HIS CHAMBERS! I CAN HEAR VOICES FROM IN...
HUH?
...GULLIBLE FOOL--PLAYED RIGHT INTO MY HANDS!
I'D HAVE GIVEN ANYTHING FOR THIS BODY--ANYTHING--
--AND HOLLAND TRADED IT FOR A PALTRY TASTE OF FLEETING HUMANITY!
AN ILL-CONSIDERED BARGAIN ON HIS PART, INDEED...
...FOR THIS MALFORMED BODY MEANS FAR MORE THAN IMMORTALITY, MY PETS--
--IT MEANS POWER!
--POWER TO EXACT THE VENGEANCE THAT HAS GNAWED AT MY HEART FOR YEARS...
...VENGEANCE AGAINST THE UNTHINKING CRETINS WHO INHABIT THE VILLAGE BELOW...
...THE SELF-CENTERED SNOBS WHO SHUNNED ME IN MY YOUTH--WHO SCORNED ME AND MY WORK!
IN THIS INDESTRUCTIBLE BODY, I'M ABLE TO DO WHAT I'VE LONGED TO DO...
...I CAN GO DOWN THE MOUNTAIN--AND DESTROY THEM ALL!
18

THE MAN IS MAD--AND I'VE GIVEN HIM THE MEANS TO CARRY OUT HIS HOMICIDAL DREAM!
DEAR LORD--WHAT HAVE I DONE?


I'VE SOLD OUT--THAT'S WHAT I'VE DONE--
--TRADED THE LIVES OF COUNTLESS PEOPLE FOR THE SAKE OF REGAINING MY OWN--
--AND THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO ABOUT IT--NOTHING!

NO!
THERE IS A WAY TO STOP HIM--
EVEN IF IT COSTS ME MY SOUL!

"...AND SO YOU WILL REMAIN--PROVIDING THE ENCHANTMENT IS NOT DISTURBED!"
THE WORDS POUND IN ALEC HOLLAND'S MIND AS HE RACES UP CRUDE TOWER STAIRS--AND BURSTS INTO A DIMLY-LIT ROOM...

PARDON THE INTRUSION, FRIEND--BUT YOU'RE STANDING IN MY WAY!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

UNGH--THING IS FASTER THAN IT LOOKS--!
IT'S-- BREAKING MY--BACK!
THE ROBE SASH-- MY ONLY HOPE--!
HAVE TO PRAY THAT THE NYLON CLOTH IS STRONGER--
--THAN THIS MONSTER'S SYNTHETIC THROAT!
THE CREATURE IS FINISHED-- BUT THERE'S ONE THING MORE I MUST ATTEND TO!
HOLLAND-- DON'T!
FOR GOD'S SAKE, MAN-- YOU'LL RUIN EVERYTHING!
YES, ARCANE-- FOR GOD'S SAKE...
20

...AND FOR HUMANITY AS WELL!
KWAMP!
YOU UNMITIGATED IDIOT...
...DO YOU...
...KNOW WHAT...
...YOU HAVE...
...DONE?
I KNOW, ARCANE... I KNOW!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

RUINED--EVERYTHING RUINED--BECAUSE OF YOUR SELF-RIGHTEOUS STUPIDITY!
AT HIM, MY PETS--TEAR HIM APART!
ARCANE IS ESCAPING..! THESE BEASTIES ARE...HOLDING ME BACK..!
ARCANE!
THE SINGLE WORD ROLLS HARSHLY FROM MOSS-ENCUMBERED LIPS--BUT IT IS MUCH MORE THAN A WORD...
...IT IS AN EPITHET--A CURSE--A PROMISE OF RETRIBUTION NOT LONG IN COMING...
...AND IT ECHOES THROUGH THE ANCIENT BATTLEMENTS LIKE THE DEATH-KNELL OF A DREAM...
STOP HIM, MY PETS--STOP HIM!
NO CHANCE, OLD MAN... I'M COMING FOR YOU...

...AND NOT ALL THE HOSTS OF HELL WILL STOP ME NOW..!
KRACK!
NO--KEEP AWAY FROM ME--STAY BACK--!

I GAVE YOU WHAT YOU WANTED--MADE YOU HUMAN AGAIN--!
IT'S YOUR OWN FAULT THAT YOU'VE REVERTED TO THE MONSTER--YOUR OWN FAULT--YOUR OWN...

AAUUU

GONE-- ALL OF THEM!
THEY WERE LOYAL... TO THE END!
SHAKING HIS MOSSY HEAD SADLY, THE MAN-MONSTER TURNS FROM THE WINDOW--AND SILENTLY SHAMBLES AWAY...
...HIS THOUGHTS DWELLING ON AN AGED MADMAN AND HIS PATHETIC LITTLE FLOCK...
...SO HE WON'T HAVE TO THINK OF-- HIMSELF!
LOST IN CONTEMPLATION, THE SWAMP THING DOES NOT HEAR THE PONDEROUS FORM THAT RISES UP TO FOLLOW...
NEXT ISSUE:
THE PATCHWORK MAN!
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE ON OR ABOUT DEC. 7TH

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72

ONCE MORE--THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING!

THE PATCHWORK MAN

A LEN WEIN-BERNI WRIGHTSON-JOE ORLANDO PRESENTATION.

DAWN ROLLS IN WITH A WHIMPER, SPREADING SHIMMERING FINGERS OF SCARLET ACROSS THE SNOW-CAPPED BALKAN LANDSCAPE LIKE A BLIND MAN FEELING HIS WAY...
BELOW, IN THE VALLEY, THE VILLAGE IS COMING AWAKE--SHUTTERS ARE THROWN OPEN, KETTLES ARE SET TO BOIL...
WHILE, MID-WAY UP THE MOUNTAINSIDE, AN INCREASINGLY FAMILIAR MOSS-CAKED FIGURE GAZES DOWN AT THOSE DAWN-TOUCHED ROOFTOPS WITH MORE THAN A TINGE OF REGRET...
HUMANITY... FRIENDSHIP... THEY WERE ALMOST MINE AGAIN...!
SO CLOSE... I CAME SO VERY CLOSE...!
T-1964

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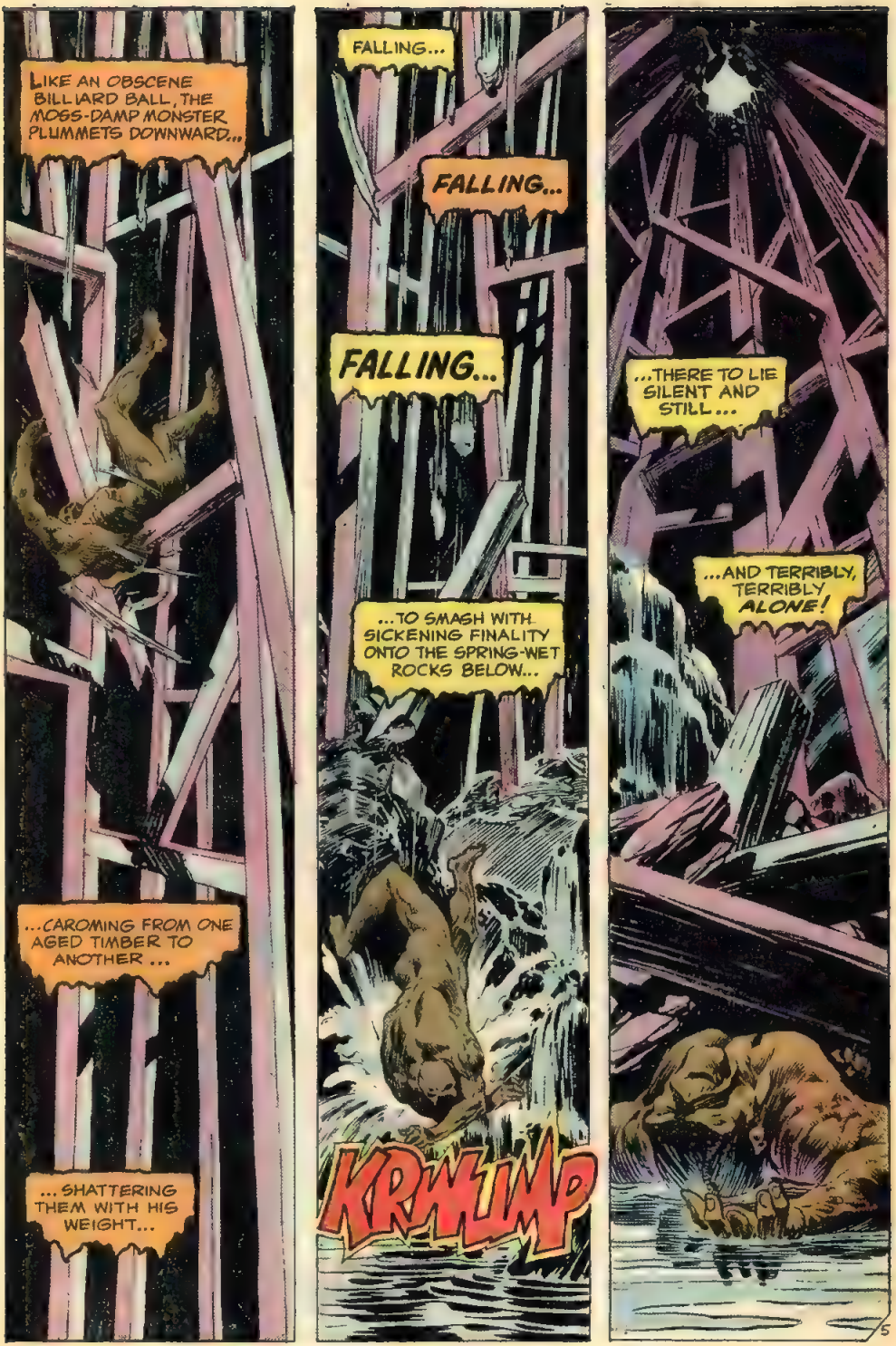
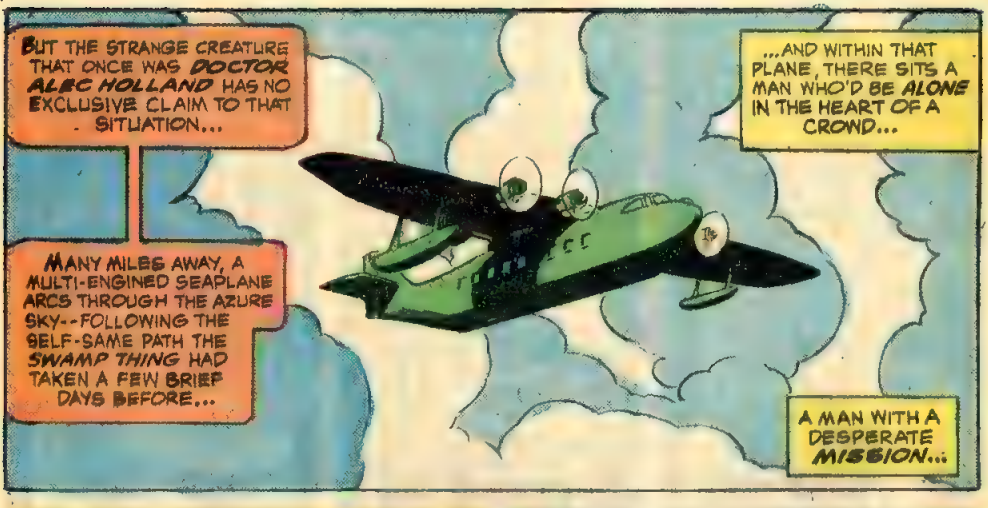
DAYLIGHT DANCES ON THE BATTLEMENTS AS THE MAN-MONSTER LOOKS OUT ACROSS THE MOUNTAINS--AND REMEMBERS...
HE REMEMBERS THE GROTESQUE UN-MEN, WHO CARRIED HIM TO THIS DISTANT LAND AT THE COMMAND OF THE AGED WIZARD CALLED ARCANE...
ARCANE, WHO TOOK THE FORM OF THE SWAMP THING AS HIS OWN, THUS TURNING DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND HUMAN ONCE AGAIN...
A HUMANITY VIOLENTLY SACRIFICED TO PROTECT THE UNKNOWING TOWNSFOLK FAR BELOW...
THEN THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY OF A MAN TURNS--AND SHAMBLES BACK THROUGH THE CASTLE'S TWISTING CORRIDORS...
THAT LIGHT... COMING FROM...
...ARCANE'S LABORATORY... FILLED WITH CHEMICALS... EQUIPMENT...
...AND MAYBE... JUST MAYBE... A CHANCE TO FIND A CURE FOR MY... CONDITION...!
IT'S HIDDEN HERE SOMEWHERE... AMONG THE TUBES...AND VIALS... AND BEAKERS...
JUST A MATTER OF PUTTING THE MATERIALS TOGETHER...IN PRECISELY THE CORRECT RELATIONSHIP AND...
PLINK!
...NO GOOD...! HANDS TOO THICK...TOO STRONG...

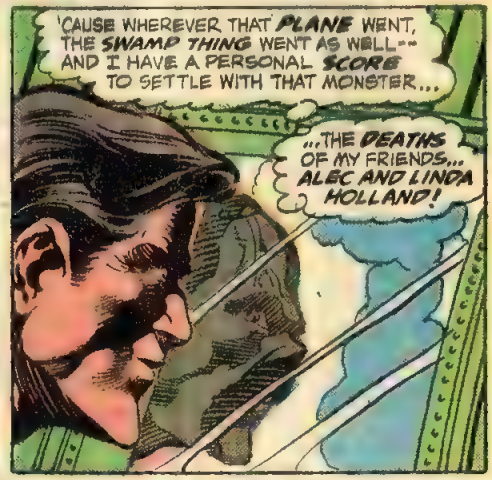
DAMN--! ALL OF THIS MATERIAL AT HAND... AND ALL OF IT USELESS...!
THIS BODY IMPRISONS ME IN MORE WAYS THAN ONE...REFUSES TO HELP ME RID MYSELF OF IT...!
WELL...IF I CAN'T EFFECT A CURE ALONE...
...I'LL FIND SOMEONE WILLING TO WORK WITH ME...!
I'LL HEAD BACK TO THE UNITED STATES... AND BEGIN TO...
WHA..? THE FLAGSTONE FLOOR...GIVING WAY BENEATH ME...!
SLIPPING TOO QUICKLY... NOTHING TO GRAB HOLD OF...!
WHO?

HALTED IN MID-PLUNGE, THE MASSIVE MAN-MONSTER TURNS HIS BURNING EYES UPWARD--TO STARE IN ASTONISHMENT AT THE TWISTED FORM OF HIS UNEXPECTED SAVIOR...
UUHHNN... UUHHNN...
ONE OF ARCANE'S CREATIONS... BROKEN FREE OF HIS CHAINS...!
BUT IS HE POWERFUL ENOUGH...TO PULL ME OUT OF THIS HOLE...?
GNARLED FINGERS DIGGING FURROWS IN THE MOSSY FLESH, THE PATCHWORK FIGURE STRAINS TO PULL HIS AWESOME BURDEN OUT FROM THE YAWNING PIT...
SLOWLY... PONDEROUSLY... GAINING INCH AFTER PRECIOUS INCH, THE SWAMP THING RISES UPWARD...
...THEN, WITH FATAL SUDDENNESS, HE IS LOST AGAIN INTO THE DARKNESS -- LEAVING ONLY SCRAPS OF ROTTED VEGETATION BENEATH THE OTHER'S BROKEN FINGERNAILS TO ATTEST TO THE RESCUE'S FAILURE...
MY SKIN'S TOO SLIPPERY... HE COULDN'T MAINTAIN A GRIP...!
I'M FALLING... FALLING...!

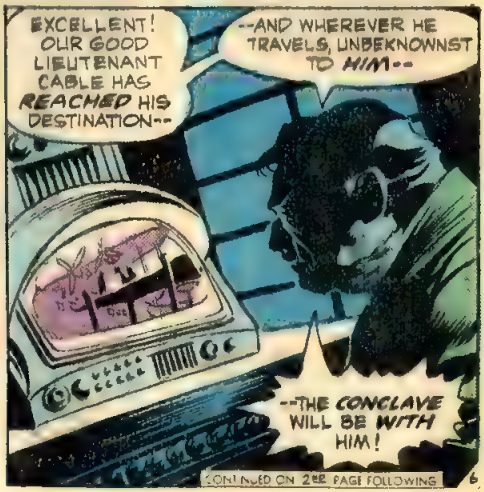

LIKE AN OBSCENE BILLIARD BALL, THE MOSS-DAMP MONSTER PLUMMETS DOWNWARD...
...CAROMING FROM ONE AGED TIMBER TO ANOTHER ...
...SHATTERING THEM WITH HIS WEIGHT...
FALLING...
FALLING...
FALLING...
...TO SMASH WITH SICKENING FINALITY ONTO THE SPRING-WET ROCKS BELOW...
KRAKUMP
...THERE TO LIE SILENT AND STILL...
...AND TERRIBLY, TERRIBLY ALONE!


BUT THE STRANGE CREATURE THAT ONCE WAS DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND HAS NO EXCLUSIVE CLAIM TO THAT SITUATION...
MANY MILES AWAY, A MULTI-ENGINED SEAPLANE ARCS THROUGH THE AZURE SKY--FOLLOWING THE SELF-SAME PATH THE SWAMP THING HAD TAKEN A FEW BRIEF DAYS BEFORE...
...AND WITHIN THAT PLANE, THERE SITS A MAN WHO'D BE ALONE IN THE HEART OF A CROWD...
A MAN WITH A DESPERATE MISSION...

WITHIN THAT SOARING SEAPLANE, LIEUTENANT MATT CABLE ENDURES THE FLIGHT--AND PONDERS...
EASY, POOCH--EASY! IT WON'T BE MUCH LONGER!
ACCORDING TO OUR INFORMATION, THAT BLACK PLANE LANDED DEEP IN THE BALKAN MOUNTAINS...
...SO THAT'S WHERE WE'RE HEADING, TOO!


'CAUSE WHEREVER THAT PLANE WENT, THE SWAMP THING WENT AS WELL--AND I HAVE A PERSONAL SCORE TO SETTLE WITH THAT MONSTER...
...THE DEATHS OF MY FRIENDS... ALEC AND LINDA HOLLAND!

THAT'S WHY I HAD MYSELF TRANSFERRED TO AN INTERPOL ASSIGNMENT...
...FOR, IF NEED BE, I'LL FOLLOW THAT KILLER-CREATURE TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH!


EXCELLENT! OUR GOOD LIEUTENANT CABLE HAS REACHED HIS DESTINATION--
--AND WHEREVER HE TRAVELS, UNBEKNOWNST TO HIM--
--THE CONCLAVE WILL BE WITH HIM!
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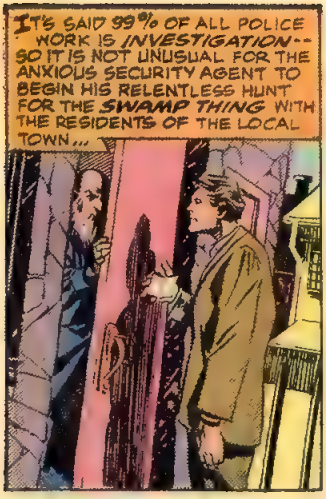
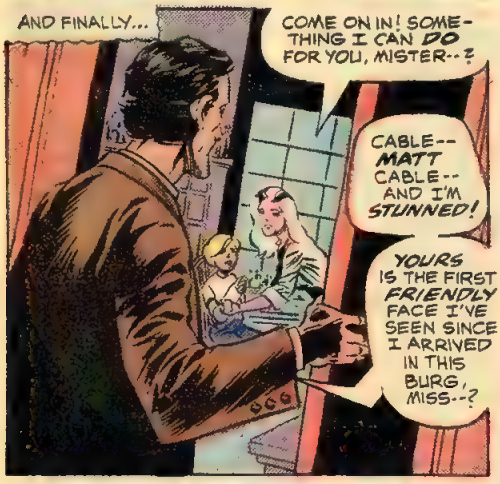
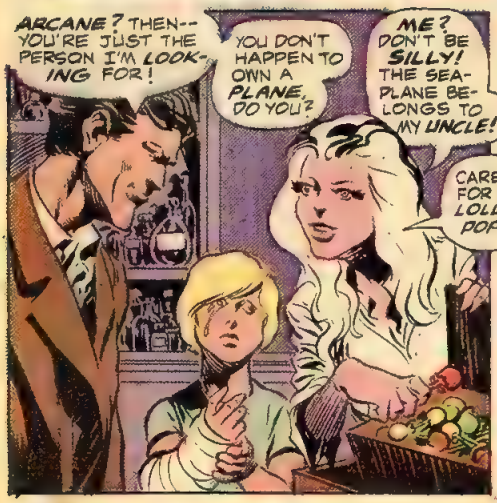

IT'S SAID 99% OF ALL POLICE WORK IS INVESTIGATION--SO IT IS NOT UNUSUAL FOR THE ANXIOUS SECURITY AGENT TO BEGIN HIS RELENTLESS HUNT FOR THE SWAMP THING WITH THE RESIDENTS OF THE LOCAL TOWN...

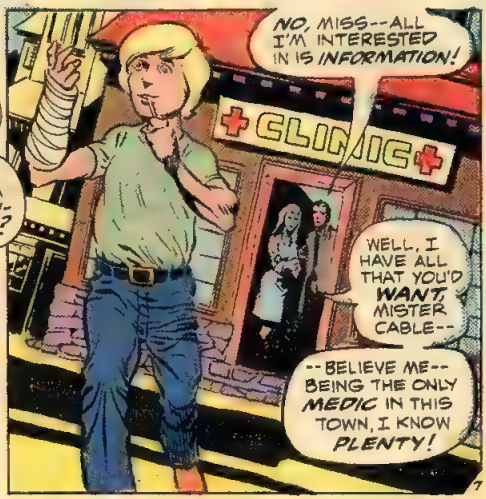
DOORS ARE OPENED AND QUESTIONS ARE ASKED--BUT THE ANSWER IS ALWAYS THE SAME...

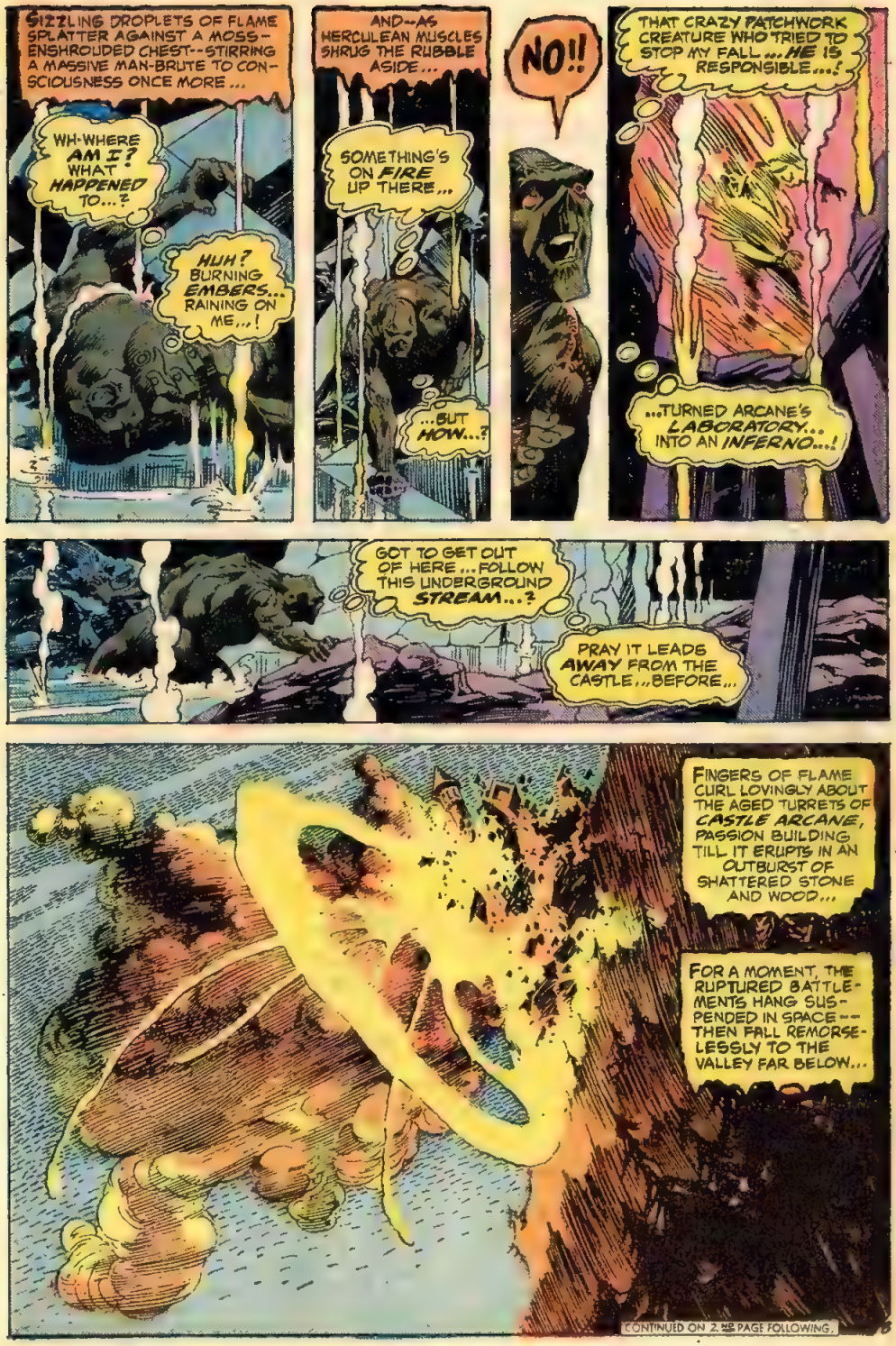
SILENCE...COLD, UNAPPROACHABLE SILENCE...


AND FINALLY...
COME ON IN! SOMETHING I CAN DO FOR YOU, MISTER--?
CABLE--MATT CABLE--AND I'M STUNNED!
YOURS IS THE FIRST FRIENDLY FACE I'VE SEEN SINCE I ARRIVED IN THIS BURG, MISS--?

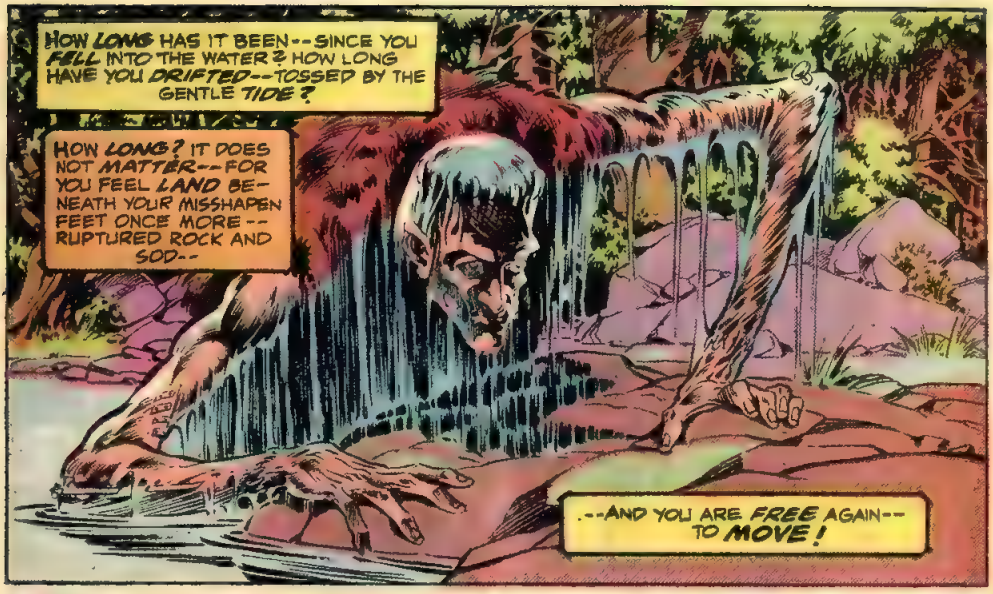
THE NAME IS ARCANE, MISTER CABLE--
--BUT YOU CAN CALL ME ABIGAIL!


ARCANE? THEN--YOU'RE JUST THE PERSON I'M LOOKING FOR!
YOU DON'T HAPPEN TO OWN A PLANE, DO YOU?
ME? DON'T BE SILLY! THE SEAPLANE BELONGS TO MY UNCLE!
CARE FOR A LOLLIPOP?


NO, MISS--ALL I'M INTERESTED IN IS INFORMATION!
CLINIC
WELL, I HAVE ALL THAT YOU'D WANT, MISTER CABLE--
--BELIEVE ME--BEING THE ONLY MEDIC IN THIS TOWN, I KNOW PLENTY!


SIZZLING DROPLETS OF FLAME SPLATTER AGAINST A MOSS-ENSHROUDED CHEST--STIRRING A MASSIVE MAN-BRUTE TO CONSCIOUSNESS ONCE MORE...
WH-WHERE AM I? WHAT HAPPENED TO...?
HUH? BURNING EMBERS... RAINING ON ME...!
AND--AS HERCULEAN MUSCLES SHRUG THE RUBBLE ASIDE...
SOMETHING'S ON FIRE UP THERE...
...BUT HOW...?
NO!!
THAT CRAZY PATCHWORK CREATURE WHO TRIED TO STOP MY FALL ...HE IS RESPONSIBLE...!
...TURNED ARCANE'S LABORATORY... INTO AN INFERNO...!
GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE...FOLLOW THIS UNDERGROUND STREAM...?
PRAY IT LEADS AWAY FROM THE CASTLE...BEFORE...
FINGERS OF FLAME CURL LOVINGLY ABOUT THE AGED TURRETS OF CASTLE ARCANE, PASSION BUILDING TILL IT ERUPTS IN AN OUTBURST OF SHATTERED STONE AND WOOD...
FOR A MOMENT, THE RUPTURED BATTLEMENTS HANG SUSPENDED IN SPACE--THEN FALL REMORSELESSLY TO THE VALLEY FAR BELOW...
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

HAUNTING THUNDER FADES INTO SILENCE--AS THE CLAMOR OF ANXIOUS FOOTSTEPS RISES TO TAKE ITS PLACE...
THE PEOPLE OF THE VILLAGE COME SCURRYING UP THE MOUNTAIN, BRINGING MORBID CURIOSITY... AND DESPAIR...
OUT OF MY WAY--MY UNCLE'S IN THERE! HE NEEDS ME--!
IF HE WAS IN THERE, LADY--HE'S BEYOND NEEDING ANYTHING!
NOW CALM DOWN, ABIGAIL--CALM DOWN!
Y-YOU...DON'T UNDERSTAND, CABLE! HE...WAS ALL THE FAMILY I HAD!
BUT I DO UNDER-STAND, ABIGAIL--
--MAYBE MORE THAN YOU COULD KNOW--!
YOU SEE--I LOST SOMETHING IN THAT HOLOCAUST, TOO--
SOMETHING I'VE SEARCHED FOR ACROSS THE FACE OF THIS WORLD..
--THE KILLER--OF THE ONLY TWO FRIENDS I'VE EVER CARED FOR--
--A HEARTLESS, HIDEOUS MONSTER--IN MANY DIFFERENT WAYS!
YEAH--WE BOTH LOST SOMETHING IN THAT FIRE, ABIGAIL!
--AND GOD FORGIVE ME, I'M NOT SURE WHO'S LOST MORE!


HOW LONG HAS IT BEEN--SINCE YOU FELL INTO THE WATER? HOW LONG HAVE YOU DRIFTED--TOSSED BY THE GENTLE TIDE?
HOW LONG? IT DOES NOT MATTER--FOR YOU FEEL LAND BENEATH YOUR MISSHAPEN FEET ONCE MORE--RUPTURED ROCK AND SOD--
..--AND YOU ARE FREE AGAIN--TO MOVE!

FREE--TO PICK YOUR WAY THROUGH THE WINDING FOREST PATHWAYS--
--TO RETRACE STEPS YOU SOMEHOW KNOW YOU HAVE TREAD BEFORE...

YOU WALK--AND SOMETHING TUGS AT YOUR BECLOUDED BRAIN--
--SOMETHING FLICKERS BEFORE YOUR HAZY EYES LIKE A DYING FLAME--
--SOMETHING THAT REKINDLES THE MEMORIES...

YOU REMEMBER WALKING--A DIFFERENT DAY--THE SAME FOREST...
YOU WERE WALKING--HURRYING HOME!
YOU HAD BEEN AWAY TOO LONG--FROM YOUR VILLAGE--FROM YOUR DAUGHTER--
AND NOW THE PEOPLE FROM THE GOVERNMENT WERE COMING TO TAKE HER...
BUT YOU WOULD NOT LET THEM STEAL THE ONE THING YOU LOVED--
YOU WOULD FIGHT THEM IF YOU MUST--AND, FAILING THAT--
YOU WOULD TAKE THE CHILD--AND RUN!
YOU MOVED SWIFTLY THROUGH THE FOREST, YOUR HEART POUNDING IN YOUR CHEST--
BOOM
--AND THEN YOUR HEART STOPPED--
--AND THE WORLD EXPLODED INTO DARKNESS...
YOU CAME TO LOVE THE DARKNESS--IT NURTURED YOU--KEPT YOU SAFE...
YOU EMBRACED THE BLACK FOR A TIME WITHOUT TIME...
--UNTIL AGONIZING SLIVERS OF LIGHT SLASHED THROUGH THE VELVET--TO ROUSE YOU FROM YOUR SLEEP...
GREGOR!--? AT LAST--YOU ARE AWAKE--!
GREGOR!--MY BROTHER! I SHOULD HAVE WARNED YOU--TO AVOID THE ANCIENT MINE FIELD HIDDEN IN THE FOREST--!
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED!

IT'S FORTUNATE I HEARD THE EXPLOSION-- AND DECIDED TO INVESTIGATE--
--OR YOUR-- eh-- BODY MIGHT STILL BE LYING THERE--AS FODDER FOR THE WOLVES!
THERE WASN'T MUCH LEFT OF YOU, YOU REALIZE--
I HAD TO IMPROVISE MY REPAIRS FROM THE MATERIALS AT HAND!
HERE-- I'LL SHOW YOU!
YOU REMEMBER THE EXPRESSION ON THE FACE OF THE MAN WHO SAID HE WAS YOUR BROTHER--AS HE TURNED THE WEATHERED-LOOKING GLASS TOWARD YOU--
--AND YOU REMEMBER THE STARTLED GASP THAT ESCAPED YOUR CONSTRICTED THROAT--WHEN YOU SAW WHAT YOU HAD BECOME...
NOT EXACTLY A FIRST-CLASS JOB, BROTHER--
--BUT, UNDER THE CIRCUMSTANCES, IT WAS THE BEST THAT I COULD DO!

YOUR GNARLED HAND LASHED OUT BLINDLY, SEEKING TO DESTROY THE HIDEOUS IMAGE THAT MOCKED YOU SO...
GREGORI--WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
MY EQUIPMENT--MY EXPERIMENTS--YOU'LL RUIN THEM!
FORGIVE ME, GREGORI--BUT I CANNOT PERMIT YOU--!
THIS INJECTION WILL ONLY MAKE YOU SLEEP!
AND THE ARMS OF DARKNESS REACHED UP TO COMFORT YOU ONCE MORE...
YOU STAYED IN THAT MENTAL SHADOWLAND, CHAINED IN YOUR BROTHER'S DUNGEON, REFUSING TO ACCEPT WHAT YOU'D BECOME--
--UNTIL THE DAY THE DOOR OPENED--AND A MORE AWESOME HORROR STOOD FRAMED IN THE LIGHT...
THE DOOR REMAINED OPEN WHEN THEY'D GONE--ONE BY ONE, THE OTHERS WANDERED MINDLESSLY AWAY...
SNAP!
--AND, AT LENGTH, YOU DECIDED TO FOLLOW...
WHEN YOU LOST THE MOSSY BEHEMOTH TO THE ANGRY CASTLE DEPTHS, YOU DISCOVERED YOUR BROTHER'S LABORATORY...
...AND YOUR CURIOUS MEDDLING TURNED THE OLD STRUCTURE INTO A BLAZING HELL...

NOW YOUR MIND IS MUDDLED, UNABLE TO FACE THE PAST...
YOU STUMBLE ALONG ON A HALF-FORGOTTEN QUEST...
--UNTIL A SUDDEN SOUND TURNS YOU FROM YOUR TASK...
THE MAN IS UNKNOWN TO YOU--BUT THERE IS SOMETHING ABOUT THE GIRL--SOMETHING ACHINGLY FAMILIAR...
...AND A FRAGMENT OF YOUR JUMBLED MEMORY SNAPS FIRMLY INTO PLACE..
C-CABLE--! WHAT IN GOD'S NAME--?
IT'S THAT SWAMP--! NO--IT'S SOMETHING ELSE--
--BUT I WON'T LET IT TOUCH YOU!
SHE IS DIFFERENT SOMEHOW--BUT YOU CANNOT FORGET HER EYES--OR THE IVORY IN HER HAIR...
SHE IS YOUR DAUGHTER--THE ONE YOU'VE COME TO SAVE...
...AND YOU WILL NOT LET THEM KEEP HER FROM YOU...
THE GIRL GOES LIMP IN YOUR ARMS, SOFT, HELPLESS--
--AND YOU REMEMBER WHAT YOU SWORE...
YOU WILL TAKE THE CHILD--AND RUN!
ABIGAIL--?

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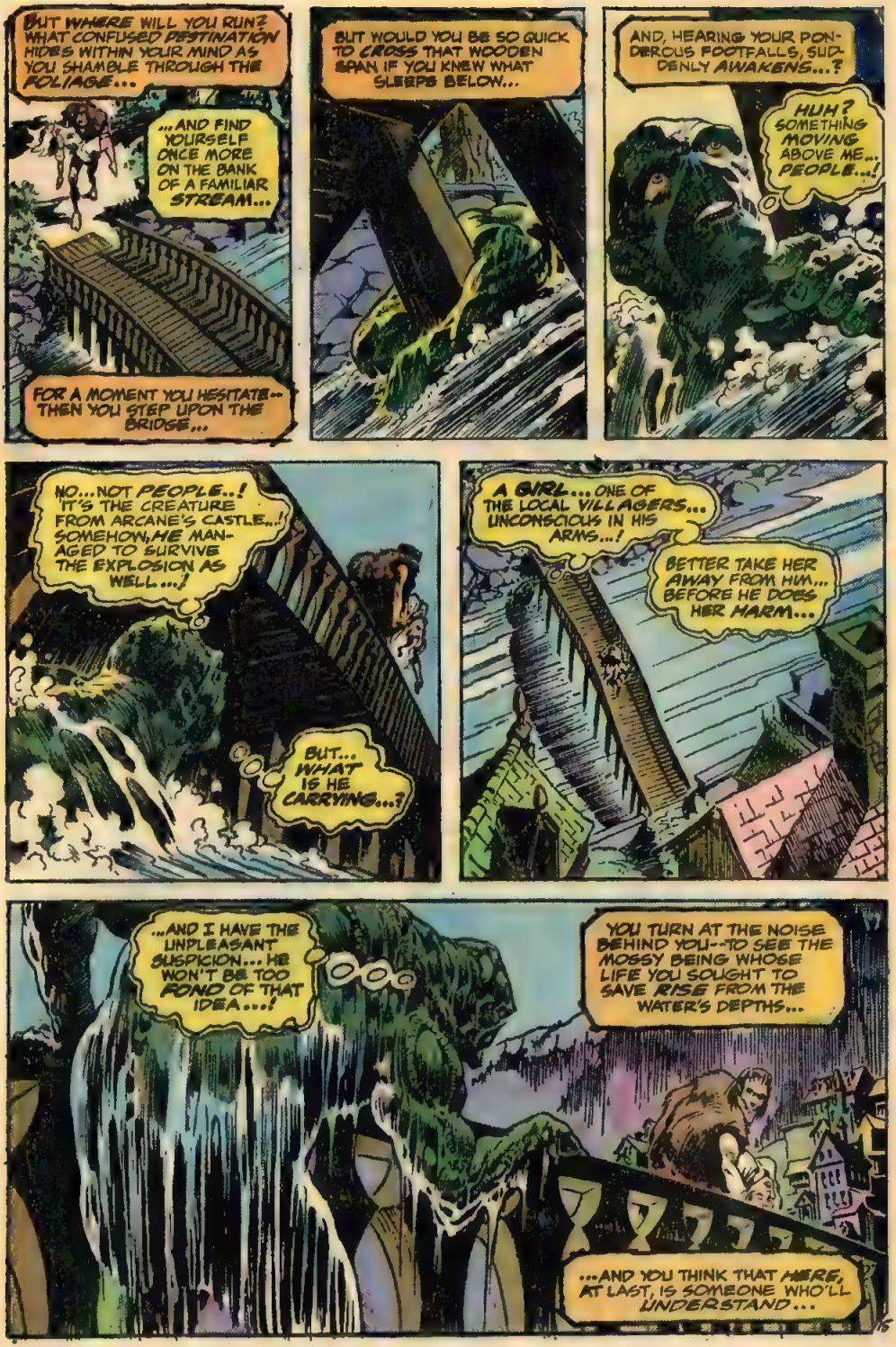

BUT WHERE WILL YOU RUN? WHAT CONFUSED DESTINATION HIDES WITHIN YOUR MIND AS YOU SHAMBLE THROUGH THE FOLIAGE...
...AND FIND YOURSELF ONCE MORE ON THE BANK OF A FAMILIAR STREAM...
FOR A MOMENT YOU HESITATE-- THEN YOU STEP UPON THE BRIDGE...
BUT WOULD YOU BE SO QUICK TO CROSS THAT WOODEN SPAN, IF YOU KNEW WHAT SLEEPS BELOW...
AND, HEARING YOUR PONDEROUS FOOTFALLS, SUDDENLY AWAKENS...?
HUH? SOMETHING MOVING ABOVE ME... PEOPLE...!
NO...NOT PEOPLE..! IT'S THE CREATURE FROM ARCANE'S CASTLE..! SOMEHOW, HE MANAGED TO SURVIVE THE EXPLOSION AS WELL...!
BUT... WHAT IS HE CARRYING...?
A GIRL... ONE OF THE LOCAL VILLAGERS... UNCONSCIOUS IN HIS ARMS...!
BETTER TAKE HER AWAY FROM HIM... BEFORE HE DOES HER HARM...
...AND I HAVE THE UNPLEASANT SUSPICION... HE WON'T BE TOO FOND OF THAT IDEA...!
YOU TURN AT THE NOISE BEHIND YOU--TO SEE THE MOSSY BEING WHOSE LIFE YOU SOUGHT TO SAVE RISE FROM THE WATER'S DEPTHS...
...AND YOU THINK THAT HERE, AT LAST, IS SOMEONE WHO'LL UNDERSTAND...

HE'S PUTTING THE GIRL DOWN...!
HAVE TO CHECK ON HER... BEFORE I DO ANYTHING ABOUT HIM...!
FEVERISHLY, YOUR BEFUDDLED BRAIN SEEKS A WAY TO COMMUNICATE-- TO TELL THIS NEW-FOUND FRIEND ABOUT YOUR DESPERATE SITUATION...
SHE'S OUT COLD... SHOCK, PROBABLY...!
...THEN YOU SEE THAT HE'S NO BETTER THAN THE REST...
...AND DISCOVERING THIS--YOU ACT!
NO ONE--NO THING--IS GOING TO STEAL THE ONE YOU LOVE...

...EVEN IF YOU MUST KILL TO MAKE CERTAIN...
HE'S GONE CRAZY...
...TRYING TO STRANGLE ME...FOR TOUCHING THE GIRL...
...AND, DESPITE HIS LOOKS... HE'S STRONG ENOUGH TO SUCCEED...!
GOT TO GET SOME LEVERAGE... PUT MY WEIGHT BEHIND IT...
...AND BREAK HIS GRIP... BEFORE HE BREAKS MY NECK...
YOU REEL BACK BENEATH THE THRUST OF A MOSS-CAKED FOOT--
--BUT SOMETHING STOPS YOU BEFORE THE BATTLE CAN BEGIN ANEW...
...THE ANGRY TUMULT OF AN APPROACHING MOB!
THERE HE IS, MEN! I TOLD YOU WE'D FIND HIM WITH--
--THE SWAMP THING!
THEN THAT MONSTER DIDN'T DIE IN THE CASTLE FIRE--!

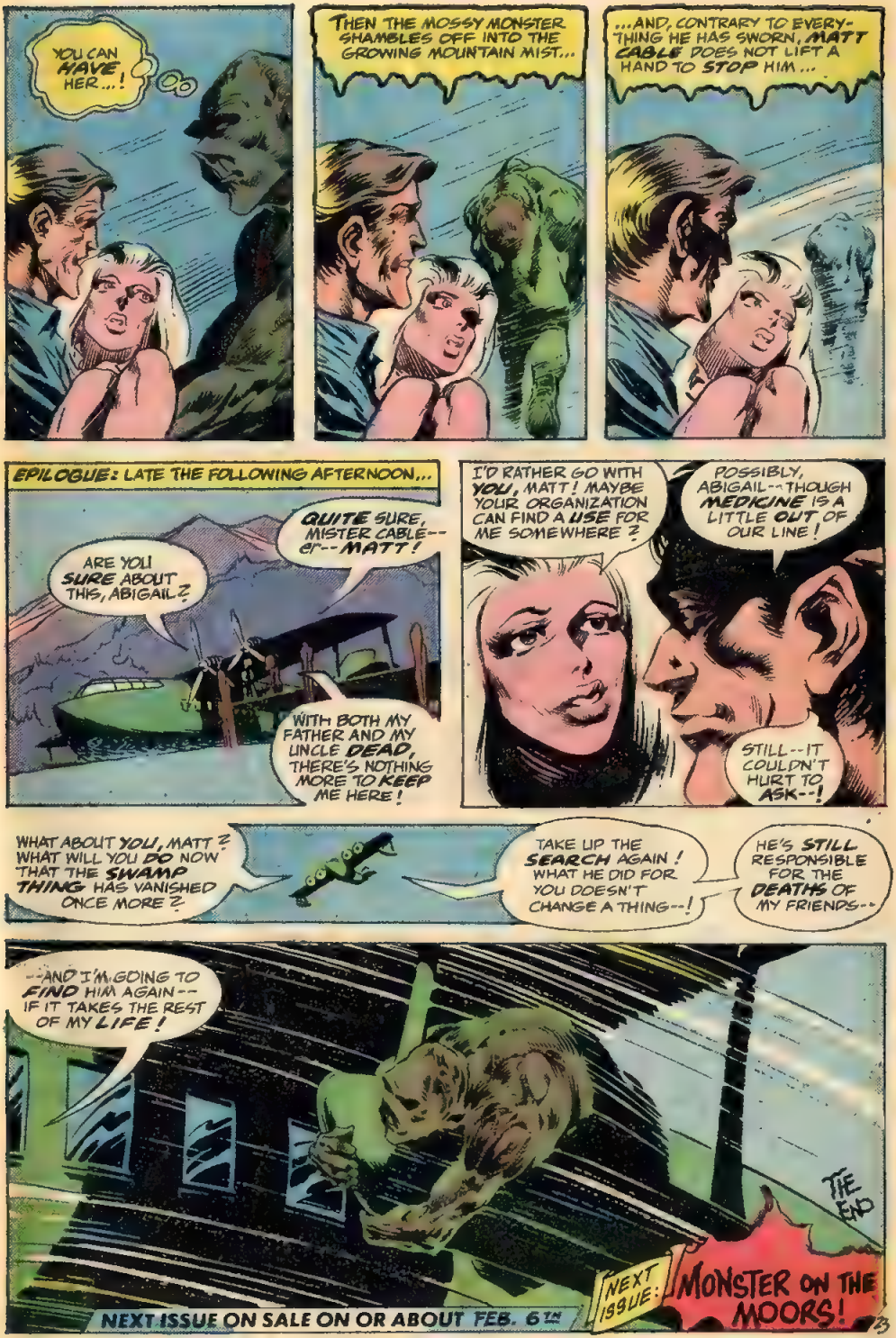
IT COMES BACK TO YOU THEN--THE REASON FOR ALL THIS SENSELESS FIGHTING...
YOU MUST SAVE THE GIRL AT ANY COST...
...AND NOTHING MUST STAND IN YOUR WAY...
THWACK
YOU RUN--BUT THEY ARE UPON YOU IN AN INSTANT--BAYING DOGS YAPPING AT THE HEELS OF A FAR-FROM-HELPLESS "FOX"...
THEY HAVE NOT CHANGED--THE PEOPLE OF YOUR VILLAGE--STILL THEY SEEK TO TAKE FROM YOU THE ONLY THING THAT GIVES MEANING TO YOUR HAUNTED LIFE...
IF NOT THROUGH LEGAL MEANS, THEN THROUGH SAVAGE, UNREASONING VIOLENCE...
...VIOLENCE THAT COULD DESTROY THE INNOCENT BURDEN YOU CARRY...
...AND YOU WILL NOT PERMIT THAT TO HAPPEN...
NO--YOU DEFINITELY WILL NOT PERMIT THAT!
KWARUNK!
CONTINUED ON THE PAGE FOLLOWING.
18

BEFORE THE STARTLED CROWD CAN REGAIN ITS SENSES, YOU HAVE FLED INTO THE FOREST--
--LEAVING A CERTAIN ROOT-TANGLED MONSTER TO SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES OF YOUR ACTIONS...
HE'S TAKEN THE GIRL... ESCAPED...
...AND IT SEEMS THE LOCAL FOLK... DON'T CARE WHO THEY BLAME ...FOR THE DAMAGE TO THEIR BRIDGE..!
...AND I THINK I OUGHT TO FIND THAT... PATCH-WORK MAN... BEFORE THEY DO...!
IT WON'T TAKE THEM LONG... TO FIND ANOTHER WAY ACROSS...!
BUT THE HAPLESS SWAMP THING IS LONG FORGOTTEN WHEN YOU PAUSE BEFORE THE SMOLDERING RUINS...
THERE IS ONLY ONE SAFE HAVEN FOR YOU NOW--ONE PLACE YOU CAN CALL HOME...
YOU REST THE GIRL GENTLY ON THE ASH-DUSTED EARTH...
...AND YOU BEGIN TO DIG FOR THE CASTLE...
WH-WHERE AM I? WHAT HAPPENED TO...
NOW I REMEMBER--! THAT MONSTER-- KIDNAPPED ME--!
HAVE TO STOP HIM SOMEHOW--!
YOU HARDLY FEEL THE SMOKING TIMBER AS IT SLAMS AGAINST YOUR BACK...
...BUT YOU ARE ANGRY JUST THE SAME...
19

A CHILD-- HOWEVER PRECIOUS SHE IS-- MUST BE DISCIPLINED WHEN BAD...
YOU RAISE YOUR HAND TO STRIKE HER...
...BUT THE BLOW NEVER FALLS...
...FOR A MOSS-ENCRUSTED MONOLITH STANDS ROOTED IN YOUR PATH, HIS SAD EYES BLAZING LIKE UNHOLY EMBERS...
...AND, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN THIS TWISTED, MISMATCHED BODY, YOU KNOW WHAT IT IS TO FEEL PAIN...
THE SWAMP THING LIFTS YOU, BATTERS YOU, SMASHES YOU AGAINST THE BLACK-CHARRED STRUCTURE...
...AND, DEEP WITHIN THE WRECKAGE, SOMETHING GIVES WAY...
HELP ME-- PLEASE--I'M-- FALLINNGGG..
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING
20

SUSPEND TIME BY A THREAD AND LET IT SLOWLY UNRAVEL--AS IT STEALS AWAY THE MOMENTS OF A YOUNG WOMAN'S LIFE...
PLEASE-- HELP-- I CAN'T HOLD ON MUCH LONGER--!
TWO THEY CALL MONSTER STAND BY HELPLESSLY--AS ABIGAIL'S GRIP SLOWLY LOOSENS ON THE CHARRED WOODEN BEAM...
THEN THE RAGING TOWNSFOLK REACH THE CRUMBLING WRECKAGE--TO MAKE THE CAST COMPLETE...
GRIMLY, THE MAN-BRUTES PEER AT THE VILLAGERS...
THEN TURN TO THE HELPLESSLY HANGING GIRL...
...AND A DECISION IS REACHED...
IGNORING THE MOB, THE MONSTER-MEN CLAMBER DOWN THE WOODWORK-- CAREFUL NOT TO DISTURB ABIGAIL'S PRECARIOUS PERCH...
...BUT NOT QUITE CAREFUL ENOUGH...
NO-- STOP-- BEFORE THE WHOLE THING COLLAPSES--!
SLOWLY, CAUTIOUSLY, THE PATCHWORK MAN DESCENDS INTO THE ROUGH-HEWN ABYSS-- GRASPING HIS DAUGHTER WITH HANDS LIKE CHISELED STONE...

MISMATCHED MUSCLES BULGE AS THE GIRL IS LIFTED UPWARD-- INTO THE SWAMP THING'S POWERFUL HANDS...
THAT'S IT... GENTLY... GENTLY NOW...!
PLEADINGLY, THE CREATURE WHO WAS ONCE GREGORI ARCANE STARES INTO HIS DAUGHTER'S EYES--
--AND FROM THAT FLEETING GLANCE COMES A GLIMMER OF-- RECOGNITION!
THERE IS A HORRIBLE GROAN AS A TIMBER GIVES WAY-- STEEL-- SHANKED ARMS THRUST A FRAIL FORM UPWARD...
D-DADDY--?
...AND THE RUINED REMNANTS OF CASTLE ARCANE PLUNGE INTO THE BOWELS OF THE EARTH--CARRYING WITH THEM A LONE, MISSHAPEN FORM...
...A FORM THAT WEARS THE SEMBLENCE OF A SMILE ON ITS ONCE-HUMAN FACE...
THE RUMBLE FADES AND THE SWAMP THING TURNS-- TO CONFRONT AN ANTAGONISTIC AUDIENCE...
GET HIM, MEN-- BEFORE HE CAN HURT HER--!
THE MAN-BRUTE'S MOUTH BECOMES A TIGHT-LIPPED LINE, HIS DARK EYES NARROW--
--AND HE STRIDES DETERMINEDLY FORWARD...
...UNTIL HE STANDS FACE-TO-FACE WITH THE MAN WHO'S SWORN TO KILL HIM...
IF YOU WANT THE GIRL SO BADLY, CABLE...
22


YOU CAN HAVE HER...!
THEN THE MOSSY MONSTER SHAMBLES OFF INTO THE GROWING MOUNTAIN MIST...
...AND, CONTRARY TO EVERYTHING HE HAS SWORN, MATT CABLE DOES NOT LIFT A HAND TO STOP HIM...
EPILOGUE: LATE THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON...
ARE YOU SURE ABOUT THIS, ABIGAIL?
QUITE SURE, MISTER CABLE--er--MATT!
WITH BOTH MY FATHER AND MY UNCLE DEAD, THERE'S NOTHING MORE TO KEEP ME HERE!
I'D RATHER GO WITH YOU, MATT! MAYBE YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN FIND A USE FOR ME SOMEWHERE?
POSSIBLY, ABIGAIL--THOUGH MEDICINE IS A LITTLE OUT OF OUR LINE!
STILL--IT COULDN'T HURT TO ASK--!
WHAT ABOUT YOU, MATT? WHAT WILL YOU DO NOW THAT THE SWAMP THING HAS VANISHED ONCE MORE?
TAKE UP THE SEARCH AGAIN! WHAT HE DID FOR YOU DOESN'T CHANGE A THING--!
HE'S STILL RESPONSIBLE FOR THE DEATHS OF MY FRIENDS--
--AND I'M GOING TO FIND HIM AGAIN--IF IT TAKES THE REST OF MY LIFE!
THE END
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE ON OR ABOUT FEB. 6TH
NEXT ISSUE: MONSTER ON THE MOORS!

SWAMP THING
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SWAMP THING
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NO. 4
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
WRIGHTSON

WITH PRIDE--THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING!
MONSTER ON THE MOORS!
THE NIGHT IS MADE OF FOG: A MUSKY GRAY BLANKET THAT LIES UPON THE LANDSCAPE LIKE A SHROUD, OPPRESSING ALL IT EMBRACES...
TREETOPS--HILLOCKS--EVERYTHING COVERED BY THE SAME PERVADING MIST... BUT THIS NIGHT, TWO NEW OBJECTS THRUST FROM THE COLD FEN FLOOR...
ONE, THE RUPTURED WRECKAGE OF WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN A SLEEK, FOUR-ENGINE SEA-PLANE...
THE OTHER, THE TWISTED RUIN OF WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN A MAN...
A LEN WEIN-BERNI WRIGHTSON-JOE ORLANDO PRESENTATION.

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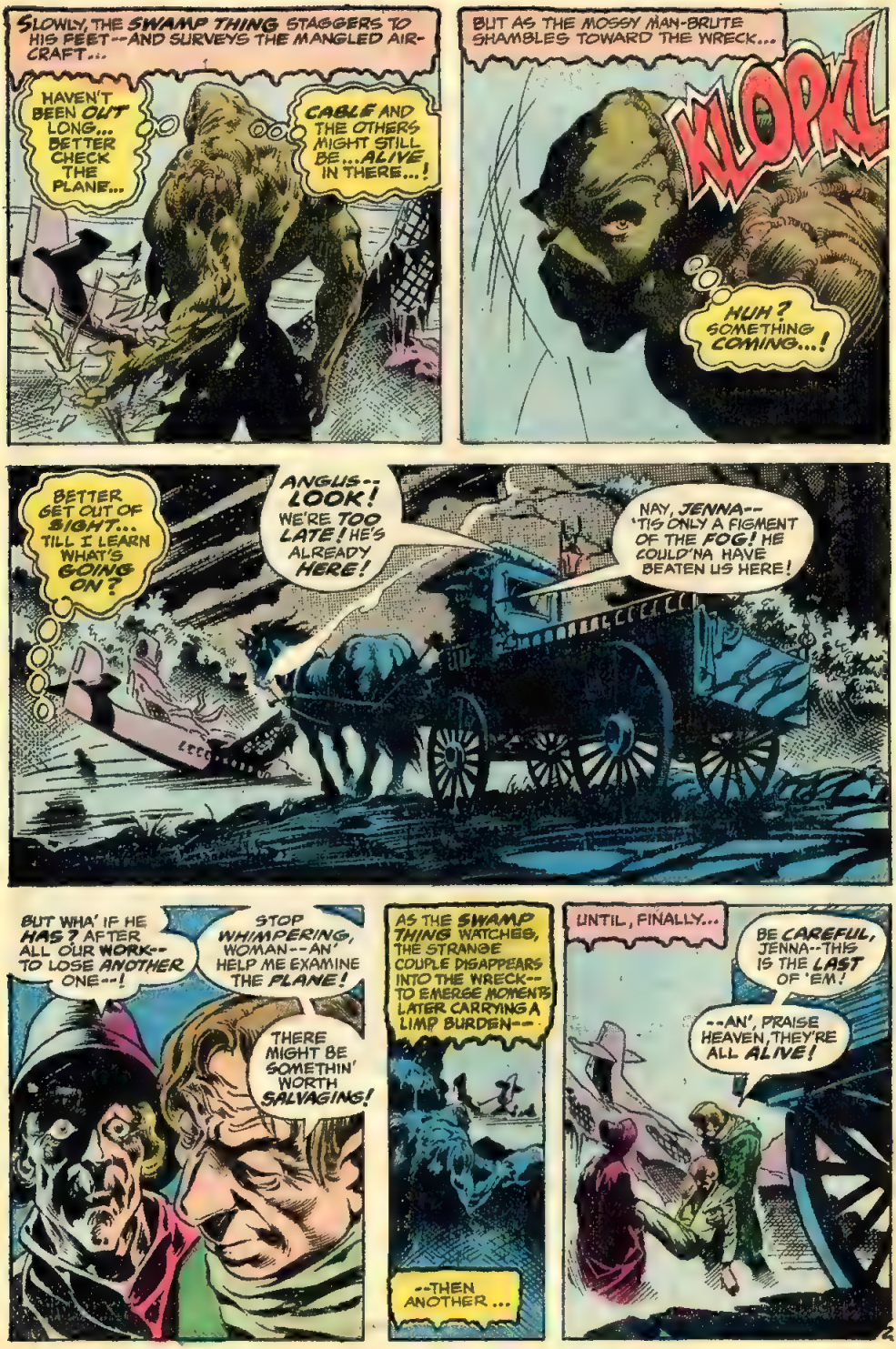
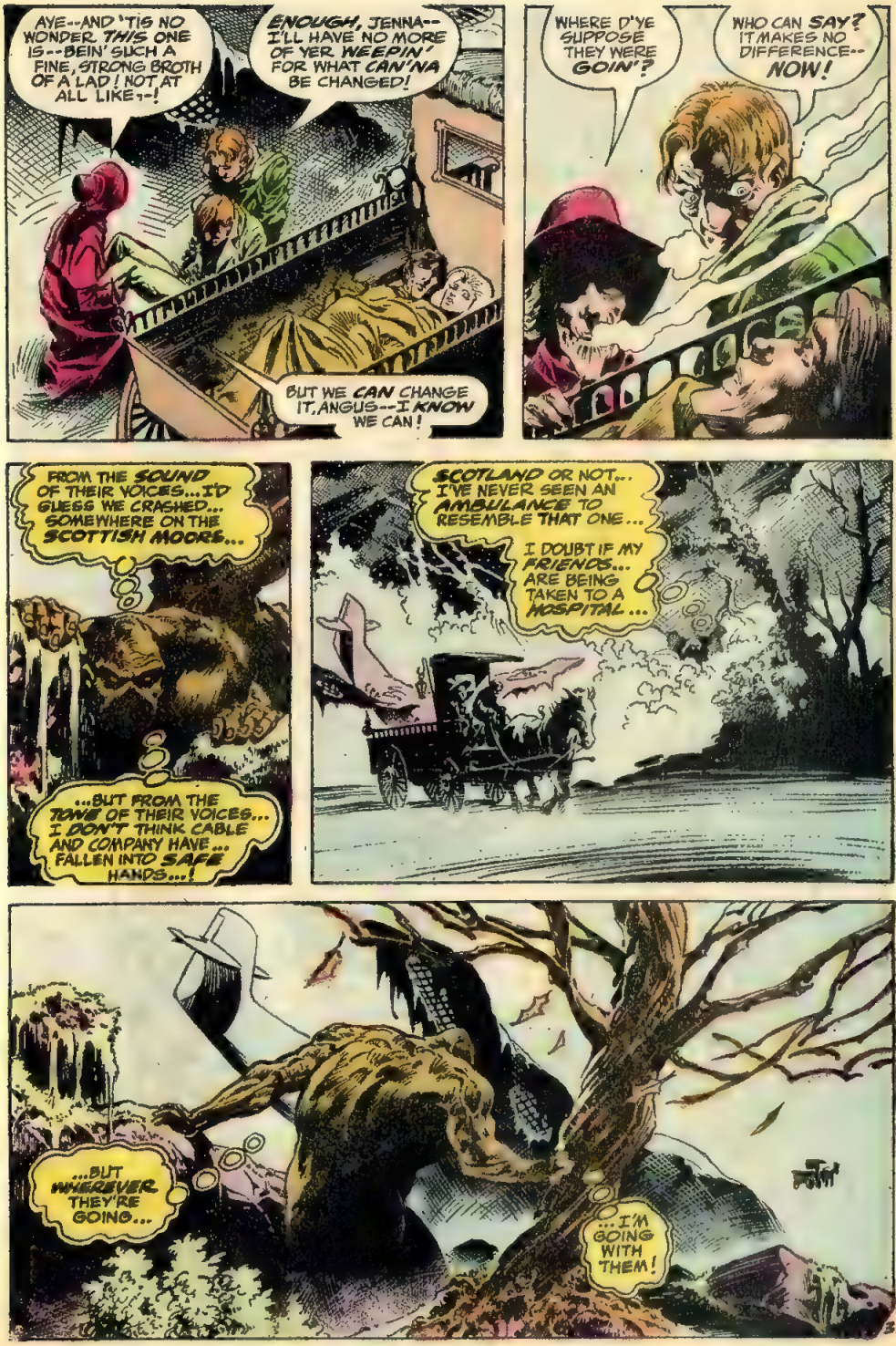
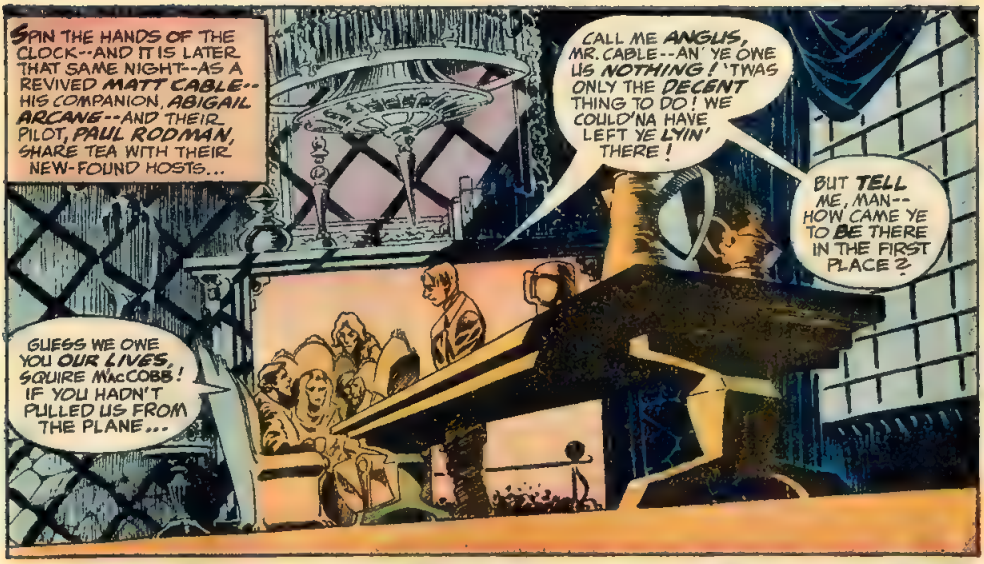
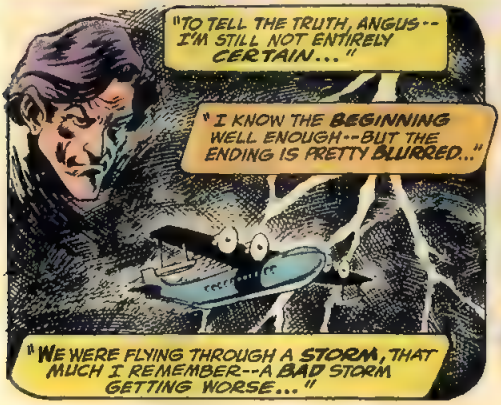
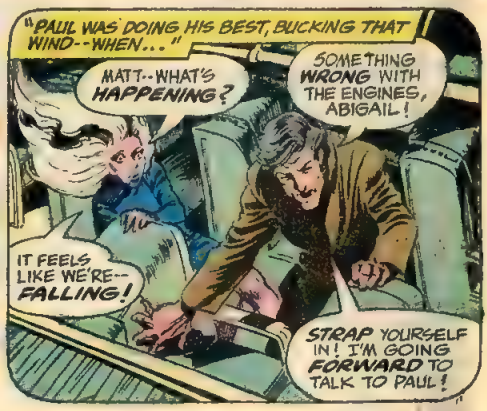

SLOWLY, THE SWAMP THING STAGGERS TO HIS FEET--AND SURVEYS THE MANGLED AIRCRAFT...
HAVEN'T BEEN OUT LONG... BETTER CHECK THE PLANE...
CABLE AND THE OTHERS MIGHT STILL BE...ALIVE IN THERE...!
BUT AS THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE SHAMBLES TOWARD THE WRECK...
KLOPK!
HUH? SOMETHING COMING...!
BETTER GET OUT OF SIGHT... TILL I LEARN WHAT'S GOING ON?
ANGUS--LOOK! WE'RE TOO LATE! HE'S ALREADY HERE!
NAY, JENNA--'TIS ONLY A FIGMENT OF THE FOG! HE COULD'NA HAVE BEATEN US HERE!
BUT WHA' IF HE HAS? AFTER ALL OUR WORK--TO LOSE ANOTHER ONE--!
STOP WHIMPERING, WOMAN--AN' HELP ME EXAMINE THE PLANE!
THERE MIGHT BE SOMETHIN' WORTH SALVAGING!
AS THE SWAMP THING WATCHES, THE STRANGE COUPLE DISAPPEARS INTO THE WRECK--TO EMERGE MOMENTS LATER CARRYING A LIMP BURDEN--
--THEN ANOTHER...
UNTIL, FINALLY...
BE CAREFUL, JENNA--THIS IS THE LAST OF 'EM!
--AN', PRAISE HEAVEN, THEY'RE ALL ALIVE!

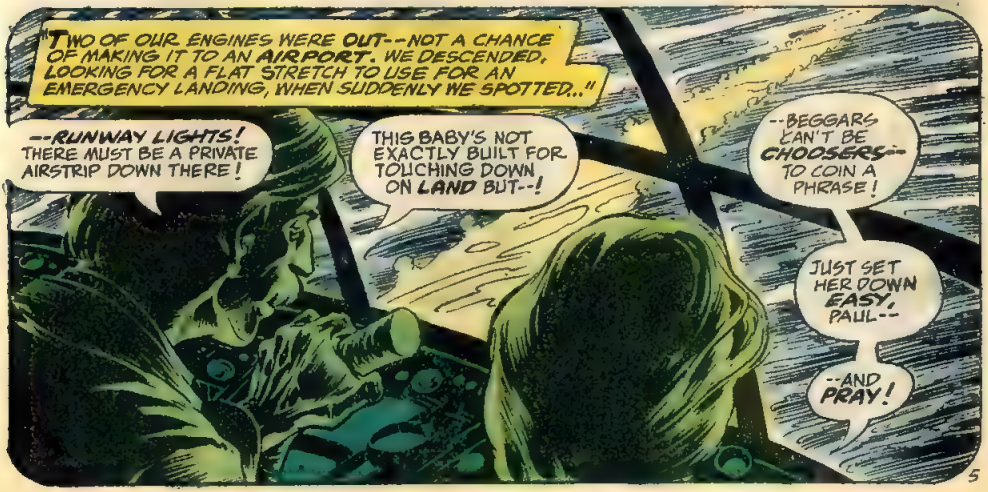

AYE--AND 'TIS NO WONDER, THIS ONE IS--BEIN' SUCH A FINE, STRONG BROTH OF A LAD! NOT AT ALL LIKE--!
ENOUGH, JENNA--I'LL HAVE NO MORE OF YER WEEPIN' FOR WHAT CAN'NA BE CHANGED!
BUT WE CAN CHANGE IT, ANGUS--I KNOW WE CAN!
WHERE D'YE SUPPOSE THEY WERE GOIN'?
WHO CAN SAY? IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE--NOW!
FROM THE SOUND OF THEIR VOICES...I'D GUESS WE CRASHED... SOMEWHERE ON THE SCOTTISH MOORS...
...BUT FROM THE TONE OF THEIR VOICES... I DON'T THINK CABLE AND COMPANY HAVE... FALLEN INTO SAFE HANDS...!
SCOTLAND OR NOT... I'VE NEVER SEEN AN AMBULANCE TO RESEMBLE THAT ONE...
I DOUBT IF MY FRIENDS... ARE BEING TAKEN TO A HOSPITAL...
...BUT WHEREVER THEY'RE GOING...
...I'M GOING WITH THEM!

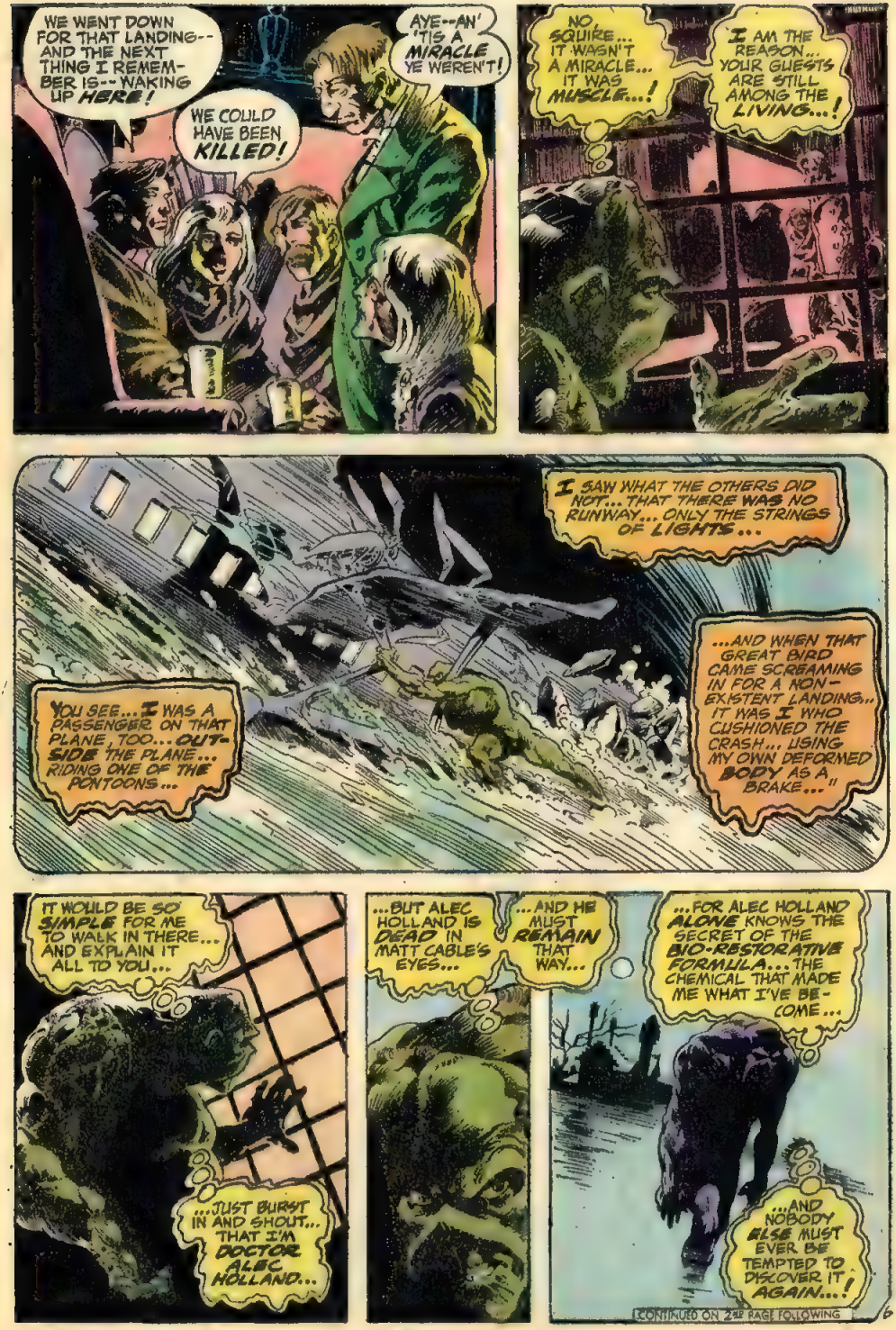
TIME PASSES: A RUTTED, MIST-SWEPT ROAD ECHOES TO THE SQUEAL OF RUSTED SPRINGS AS THE ANTIQUE CARRIAGE ROLLS ON...
ABOVE, AN ANGRY AMBER MOON CLAWS AWAY ITS CLOUDY COVERING TO RULE A STAR-STREAKED SKY...
AND, AT LAST--AT VERY LONG LAST--A MOSS-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY FINDS HIMSELF STANDING BEFORE A BUILDING--THE ONLY STRUCTURE TO DEFY THE FOG FOR COUNTLESS MILES 'ROUND...
THE SWAMP THING STUDIES THE AGING MANOR--ITS MUSTY, GRIM FACADE--AND HE KNOWS THAT THE WAGON HAS COME--HOME!


SPIN THE HANDS OF THE CLOCK--AND IT IS LATER THAT SAME NIGHT--AS A REVIVED MATT CABLE--HIS COMPANION, ABIGAIL ARCANE--AND THEIR PILOT, PAUL RODMAN, SHARE TEA WITH THEIR NEW-FOUND HOSTS...
CALL ME ANGUS, MR. CABLE--AN' YE OWE US NOTHING! 'TWAS ONLY THE DECENT THING TO DO! WE COULD'NA HAVE LEFT YE LYIN' THERE!
BUT TELL ME, MAN--HOW CAME YE TO BE THERE IN THE FIRST PLACE?
GUESS WE OWE YOU OUR LIVES, SQUIRE MacCOBB! IF YOU HADN'T PULLED US FROM THE PLANE...


"TO TELL THE TRUTH, ANGUS--I'M STILL NOT ENTIRELY CERTAIN..."
"I KNOW THE BEGINNING WELL ENOUGH--BUT THE ENDING IS PRETTY BLURRED..."
"WE WERE FLYING THROUGH A STORM, THAT MUCH I REMEMBER--A BAD STORM GETTING WORSE..."


"PAUL WAS DOING HIS BEST, BUCKING THAT WIND--WHEN..."
MATT--WHAT'S HAPPENING?
SOMETHING WRONG WITH THE ENGINES, ABIGAIL!
IT FEELS LIKE WE'RE--FALLING!
STRAP YOURSELF IN! I'M GOING FORWARD TO TALK TO PAUL!


"TWO OF OUR ENGINES WERE OUT--NOT A CHANCE OF MAKING IT TO AN AIRPORT. WE DESCENDED, LOOKING FOR A FLAT STRETCH TO USE FOR AN EMERGENCY LANDING, WHEN SUDDENLY WE SPOTTED.."
--RUNWAY LIGHTS! THERE MUST BE A PRIVATE AIRSTRIP DOWN THERE!
THIS BABY'S NOT EXACTLY BUILT FOR TOUCHING DOWN ON LAND BUT--!
--BEGGARS CAN'T BE CHOOSERS--TO COIN A PHRASE!
JUST SET HER DOWN EASY, PAUL--
--AND PRAY!


WE WENT DOWN FOR THAT LANDING--AND THE NEXT THING I REMEMBER IS--WAKING UP HERE!
WE COULD HAVE BEEN KILLED!
AYE--AN' 'TIS A MIRACLE YE WEREN'T!
NO SQUIRE... IT WASN'T A MIRACLE... IT WAS MUSCLE...!
I AM THE REASON... YOUR GUESTS ARE STILL AMONG THE LIVING...!
I SAW WHAT THE OTHERS DID NOT... THAT THERE WAS NO RUNWAY... ONLY THE STRINGS OF LIGHTS...
...AND WHEN THAT GREAT BIRD CAME SCREAMING IN FOR A NON-EXISTENT LANDING... IT WAS I WHO CUSHIONED THE CRASH... USING MY OWN DEFORMED BODY AS A BRAKE..."
YOU SEE... I WAS A PASSENGER ON THAT PLANE, TOO... OUTSIDE THE PLANE... RIDING ONE OF THE PONTOONS...
IT WOULD BE SO SIMPLE FOR ME TO WALK IN THERE... AND EXPLAIN IT ALL TO YOU...
...JUST BURST IN AND SHOUT... THAT I'M DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND...
...BUT ALEC HOLLAND IS DEAD IN MATT CABLE'S EYES...
...AND HE MUST REMAIN THAT WAY...
...FOR ALEC HOLLAND ALONE KNOWS THE SECRET OF THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA... THE CHEMICAL THAT MADE ME WHAT I'VE BECOME...
...AND NOBODY ELSE MUST EVER BE TEMPTED TO DISCOVER IT AGAIN...!
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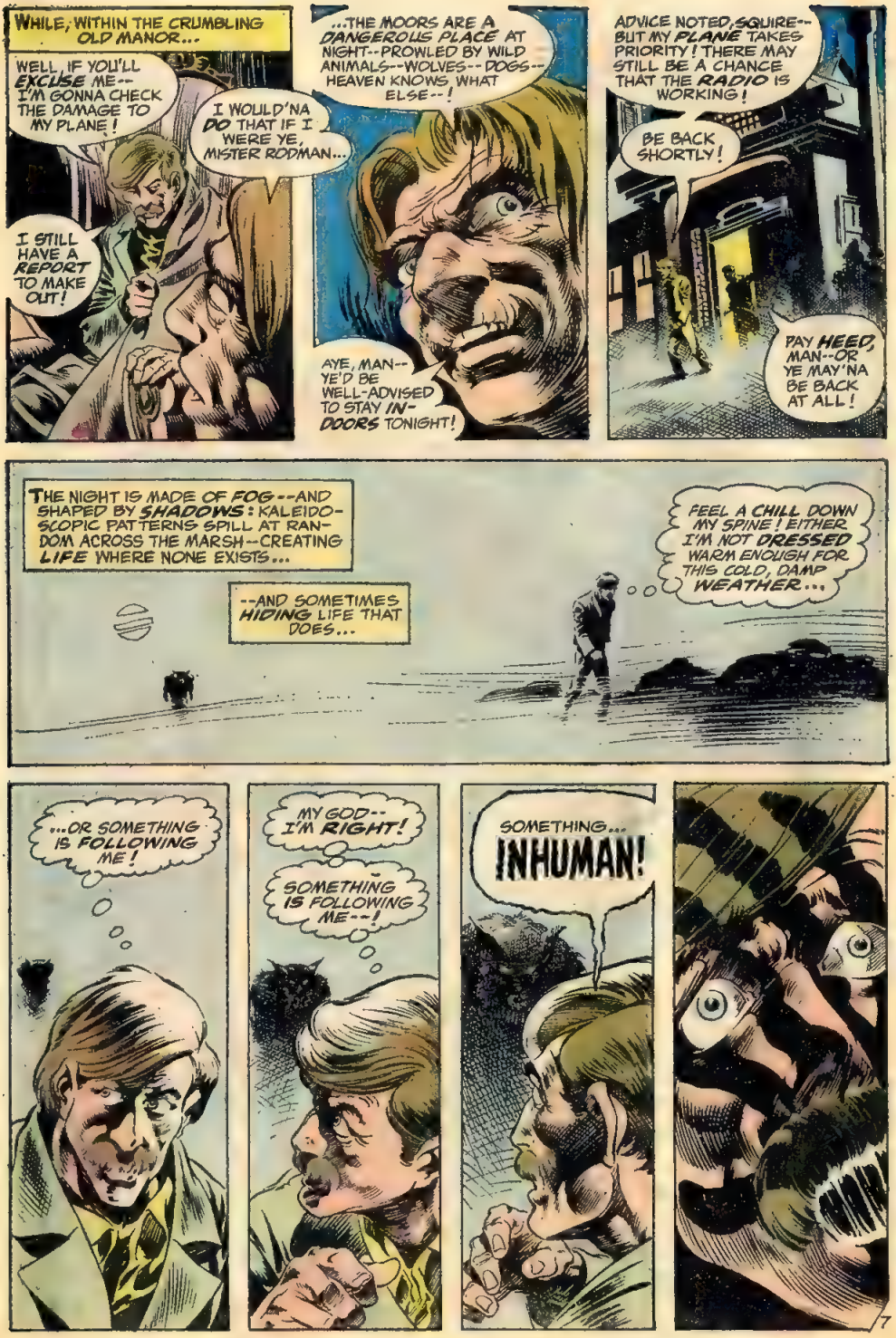
WHILE, WITHIN THE CRUMBLING OLD MANOR...
WELL, IF YOU'LL EXCUSE ME--I'M GONNA CHECK THE DAMAGE TO MY PLANE!
I WOULD'NA DO THAT IF I WERE YE, MISTER RODMAN...
I STILL HAVE A REPORT TO MAKE OUT!
...THE MOORS ARE A DANGEROUS PLACE AT NIGHT--PROWLED BY WILD ANIMALS--WOLVES--DOGS--HEAVEN KNOWS WHAT ELSE--!
AYE, MAN--YE'D BE WELL-ADVISED TO STAY IN-DOORS TONIGHT!
ADVICE NOTED, SQUIRE--BUT MY PLANE TAKES PRIORITY! THERE MAY STILL BE A CHANCE THAT THE RADIO IS WORKING!
BE BACK SHORTLY!
PAY HEED, MAN--OR YE MAY'NA BE BACK AT ALL!
THE NIGHT IS MADE OF FOG--AND SHAPED BY SHADOWS: KALEIDO-SCOPIC PATTERNS SPILL AT RAN-DOM ACROSS THE MARSH--CREATING LIFE WHERE NONE EXISTS...
--AND SOMETIMES HIDING LIFE THAT DOES...
FEEL A CHILL DOWN MY SPINE! EITHER I'M NOT DRESSED WARM ENOUGH FOR THIS COLD, DAMP WEATHER...
...OR SOMETHING IS FOLLOWING ME!
MY GOD--I'M RIGHT!
SOMETHING IS FOLLOWING ME--!
SOMETHING... INHUMAN!

SOMEHOW, THE FEAR-FILLED SCREAM THAT DRIFTS IN FROM THE BOG IS NOT TOTALLY UNEXPECTED BY THOSE IN THE ANCIENT MANOR--BUT ALL HEADS TURN AT THE SOUND JUST THE SAME...

SOME ARE ALARMED AND FRIGHTENED...

...OTHERS ONLY CURIOUS...

THAT SHRIEK... NOT THE HOWL OF THE WIND...!

OUGHT TO FIND OUT WHAT IT WAS...!

WAS: PAST TENSE OF THE VERB IS... AND APPROPRIATE, INDEED--FOR PAUL RODMAN WAS ALIVE...

BUT IS NO LONGER...

--LIKE IT WAS TORN OUT BY SOME WILD DOG--!

AYE-- 'TIS WILD A'RIGHT--

HOW HORRIBLE-- HIS THROAT--!

--BUT 'TIS NOT A DOG!

AND WHAT IS THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?

WHA' IT SAYS, MAN! THE CREATURE THAT STALKS THIS FEN BY NIGHT...

...IS NOT A NATURAL BEAST!

IT'S STRUCK BEFORE, IT HAS--KILLED SOME SHEEP-- HORSES--

--AN' TONIGHT IT'S KILLED A MAN!

SEEMS I'M NOT THE ONLY MONSTER... WALKING THE MOORS THIS EVE...!

THINK I'LL STICK AROUND AWHILE... TO MEET THE OTHER ONE...!

CONTINUED ON 2nd PAGE FOLLOWING.

AND AFTER THE REMAINS OF THE HAPLESS PILOT ARE BUNDLED UP AND CARRIED INSIDE...
I'M SORRY ABOUT YER FRIEND, MISTER CABLE-- BUT HE SHOULD'NA HAVE IGNORED MY WARNIN'--!
SCOTLAND IS AN ANCIENT COUNTRY-- WITH A HERITAGE OF LEGENDS AND MYSTERIES--
--AND MORE THAN ITS SHARE OF MONSTERS!
THAT'S A CROCK OF CLAPTRAP, SQUIRE!
IF YOU EXPECT ME TO BELIEVE THE LOCH NESS MONSTER IS GONNA COME SCRATCHING AT YOUR DOOR, YOU'RE WASTING YOUR...
WHAT IN THE NAME OF--?
SCRATCH SCRATCH SCRATCH
MATT--BE CAREFUL! YOU'VE NO IDEA WHAT'S OUT THERE!
MAYBE NOT--BUT IF IT IS THE LOCH NESS MONSTER, I WANT TO SEE IT FOR MYSELF!
NOW KEEP BACK, EVERY-ONE--I MAY HAVE TO COME OUT SHOOT-ING!
THERE IS THE FAINTEST HINT OF A TREMBLE IN MATT CABLE'S HAND AS HE THROWS OPEN THE OLD OAKEN DOOR TO REVEAL...
MATT--IT'S YOUR DOG! HE FOLLOWED US ALL THE WAY FROM THE PLANE--!
THE POOR MUTT! IN THE CONFUSION, I FORGOT ALL ABOUT HIM!
C'MERE, BOY--COME ON IN! WOULDN'T WANT YOU TO SPEND THE NIGHT ALONE!

THE SUN RISES EARLY THE NEXT MORNING AND THE TWO TRAVELING COMPANIONS RISE WITH IT! A BRIEF JOURNEY IS MADE TO RETRIEVE SOME LUGGAGE FROM THE SHATTERED AIRCRAFT--THEN...
I'M AFRAID WE MUST LEAVE, LADY MAC COBB!
AS SOON AS YOUR HUSBAND HAS THE HORSES HARNESSED, WE'LL BE ON OUR...
WHAT--? Y-YE CAN'NA BE LEAVIN' ALREADY!? WHY--YE HARDLY GOT HERE!
MOTHER--WHY DID YE NOT TELL ME WE HAD COMPANY?
HOPE I DID'NA STARTLE YE--BUT 'TIS NOT OFTEN WE HAVE GUESTS HERE!
I'M IAN MAC COBB--AND 'TIS A PLEASURE TO MEET YE, MISTER--?
MATT CABLE, IAN--AND THE PLEASURE IS MUTUAL!
WITNESS: TWO HANDS EXTENDED TO SEAL A BOND THAT TRANSCENDS ALL THEOLOGIES AND NATIONALITIES--THE BOND OF FRIENDSHIP...
THEN...
HERE--LET ME CARRY YER BAGS OUT TO THE CARRIAGE FOR YE!
DON'T BOTHER! OUR GUESTS ARE GOIN' NOWHERE!

SORRY IF I STARTLED YE--BUT I HAVE BAD NEWS!
IN ALL THE EXCITEMENT LAST NIGHT, I'M AFRAID I DID'NA STABLE THE HORSE PROPERLY--
--AN' NOW SHE SEEMS TO HAVE RUN OFF!
WE'RE ISOLATED OUT HERE--NO USE FOR AUTOMOBILES AND SUCH--
--SO BECKY WAS THE ONLY TRANSPORTATION AROUND FER MILES!
IT'LL TAKE A DAY OR SO TO HAVE SOMETHIN' SENT UP HERE FER YE--
--SO YE'RE WELCOME TO SPEND ANOTHER NIGHT!

SUNSET, THE RIBBON-LIKE CURTAIN OF CLOUDS GROWS WILDER, DARKER--AS THE STRUGGLING SUN IS TORN APART AND PULLED INTO THE SEA...
AND WITHIN THE SOLITARY MANOR, THE CONQUEST OF DARKNESS GOES ALL BUT UNNOTICED...

...BY ALL SAVE ONE...
HEY--WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE DOG?
GROWLING LIKE SOMEONE WAS STEALING HIS LAST BONE!
RROWRRR
MATT--SOMETHING'S FRIGHTENING HIM!
I KNOW IT, ABIGAIL--
--AND I THINK I'LL FIND OUT WHAT!

MATT--WAIT! I'M COMING WITH YOU!
NO, ABIGAIL--STAY INSIDE! YOU'LL...
ON SECOND THOUGHT, MAYBE YOU'D BETTER STAY WITH ME--!
THE LAST TIME I MADE THE MISTAKE OF LEAVING SOMBONE ALONE, I HAD TO BURY HER NEXT TO HER HUSBAND--
--AND I SWORE I'D NEVER HAVE TO LIVE THROUGH THAT AGAIN!
STAY CLOSE, ABBIE--AND WE'LL...
DÉJÀ VU: THE PERSISTANT FEELING YOU'VE EXPERIENCED A SITUATION ONCE BEFORE...
MATT--!
WHAT IN THE--?
EXAMPLE: INTERPOL AGENT MATT CABLE WHIRLING AT THE SOUND OF A LOW, THROATY GROWL--TO FIND HIMSELF CONFRONTING HIS MIND'S DARKEST NIGHTMARE...
AND AS THE CREATURE LOPES FORWARD...
THE SLUG--WENT RIGHT THROUGH HIM--HARMLESSLY--!
BLAM!
HE'S BETWEEN US AND THE HOUSE, ABBIE--RUN FOR THE MOORS!
MAYBE WE CAN LOSE HIM IN THE FOG!
12

THE FUR-TUFTED CREATURE WATCHES AS THE TWO FLEEING FIGURES FADE INTO THE MIST...
--AND WHAT IS ALMOST A SMILE CROSSES ITS SLAVERING LIPS...
IT HAS PLAYED THIS GAME BEFORE--ENJOYING THE THRILL OF THE HUNT--
--HERDING ITS VICTIMS BREATHLESSLY BEFORE HIM--
--UNTIL THEY HAD NO PLACE LEFT TO RUN...
THE CREATURE SQUATS ON ITS HAUNCHES, MUSCLES BUNCHING, STUDYING ITS DESPERATE PREY FOR THE POINT OF GREATEST WEAKNESS--
--TOO INVOLVED IN THE MOMENT TO NOTICE--
--THAT THE HUNTER HAS SUDDENLY BECOME THE HUNTED!
DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS CREATURE IS... BUT IT HAS ALREADY KILLED ONCE...!
CAN'T GIVE IT... A SECOND CHANCE...!
THE MIST CLEARS EVER SO SLIGHTLY AS A MOSSY MONOLITH BURSTS FROM THE SHADOWS, PULLING THE SHAGGY STALKER INTO THE AIR AS A MOTHER LIFTS HER CHILD--
--BUT WITHOUT A MOTHER'S TENDERNESS...
ABIGAIL--QUICK! -LET'S GET OUT OF HERE!

THE SWAMP THING PEERS AT HIS OPPONENT ANXIOUSLY, TRYING TO IDENTIFY IT THROUGH THE ALL-PERVADING MIST...
FOG TOO THICK... CAN'T SEE WHAT I'M FIGHTING..!
FOR AN INSTANT, TIME STANDS STILL...
...AND THE SHAGGY BEAST-THING CHOOSES THAT INSTANT--TO ACT!
UHH... CAN'T KEEP A GRIP ON IT...
A BLUR OF MOTION--AND THE CREATURE IS UPON THE SWAMP THING'S BACK--CLAWING--TEARING--SPITTING OUT GREAT CLOTS OF FOUL-TASTING SAP...
IT'S...RIPPING ME TO PIECES! GOT TO GET HIM...
--OFF!
ACTION--REACTION--A MOSSY FOOT SLIPS ON WET STONE AND...
LOST MY BALANCE... FALLING INTO...
...QUICKSAND!!
THE BEAST-CREATURE WATCHES WITH INTEREST--AS THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MONSTROSITY SINKS LOWER AND LOWER INTO THE OOZE..
MY WEIGHT... PULLING ME DOWN...!
...UNTIL THE MINGLING OF MONSTER AND MIRE IS COMPLETE...
...AND THERE IS NOTHING LEFT TO WATCH...
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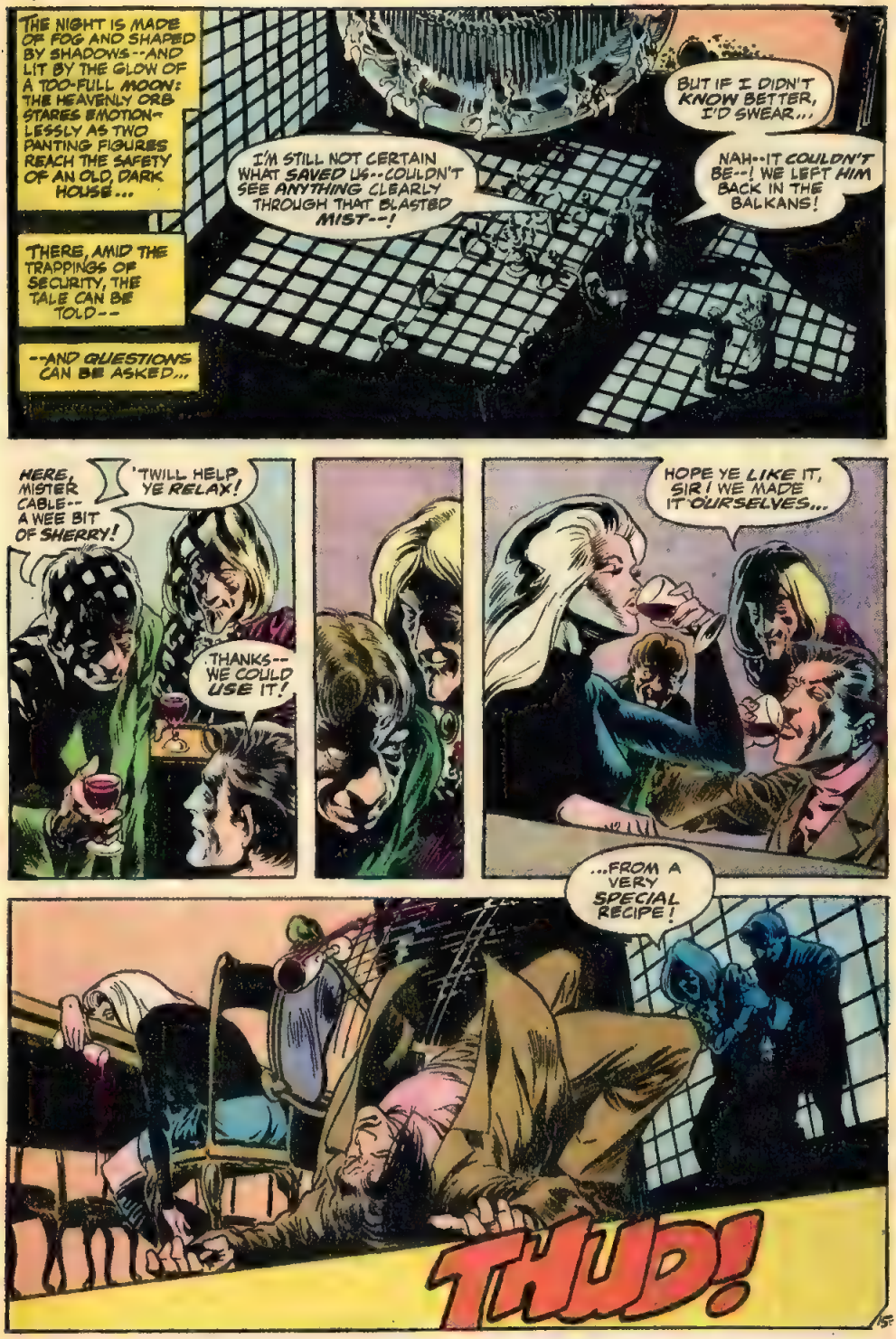
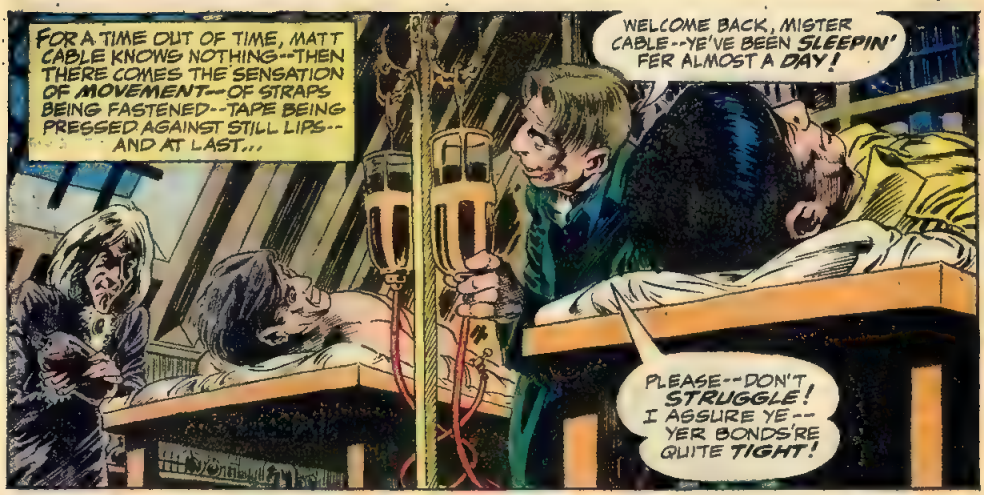
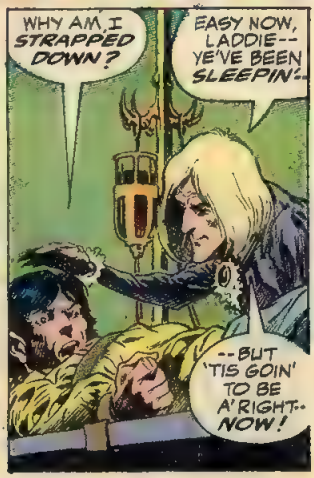
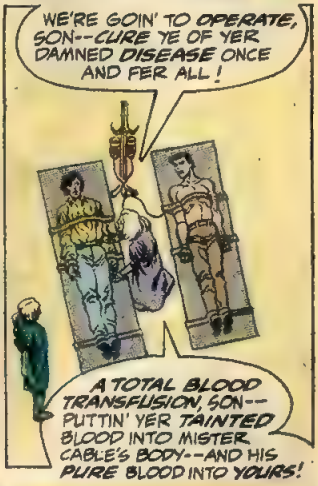
14


THE NIGHT IS MADE OF FOG AND SHAPED BY SHADOWS--AND LIT BY THE GLOW OF A TOO-FULL MOON: THE HEAVENLY ORB STARES EMOTIONLESSLY AS TWO PANTING FIGURES REACH THE SAFETY OF AN OLD, DARK HOUSE...
THERE, AMID THE TRAPPINGS OF SECURITY, THE TALE CAN BE TOLD--
--AND QUESTIONS CAN BE ASKED...
I'M STILL NOT CERTAIN WHAT SAVED US--COULDN'T SEE ANYTHING CLEARLY THROUGH THAT BLASTED MIST--!
BUT IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SWEAR...
NAH--IT COULDN'T BE--! WE LEFT HIM BACK IN THE BALKANS!
HERE, MISTER CABLE--A WEE BIT OF SHERRY!
'TWILL HELP YE RELAX!
THANKS--WE COULD USE IT!
HOPE YE LIKE IT, SIR! WE MADE IT OURSELVES...
...FROM A VERY SPECIAL RECIPE!
THUD!

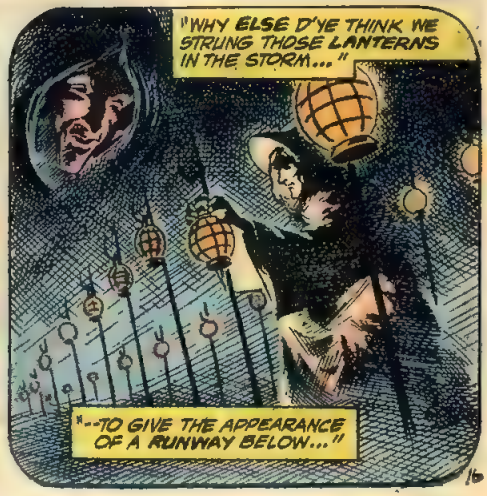

FOR A TIME OUT OF TIME, MATT CABLE KNOWS NOTHING--THEN THERE COMES THE SENSATION OF MOVEMENT--OF STRAPS BEING FASTENED--TAPE BEING PRESSED AGAINST STILL LIPS--AND AT LAST...
WELCOME BACK, MISTER CABLE--YE'VE BEEN SLEEPIN' FER ALMOST A DAY!
PLEASE--DON'T STRUGGLE! I ASSURE YE--YER BONDS'RE QUITE TIGHT!

S-STRUGGLE--? WHA--WHERE AM I?
WHAT'S HAPPENIN'?


WHY AM I STRAPPED DOWN?
EASY NOW, LADDIE--YE'VE BEEN SLEEPIN'--
--BUT 'TIS GOIN' TO BE A'RIGHT-- NOW!


WE'RE GOIN' TO OPERATE, SON--CURE YE OF YER DAMNED DISEASE ONCE AND FER ALL!
A TOTAL BLOOD TRANSFUSION, SON--PUTTIN' YER TAINTED BLOOD INTO MISTER CABLE'S BODY--AND HIS PURE BLOOD INTO YOURS!

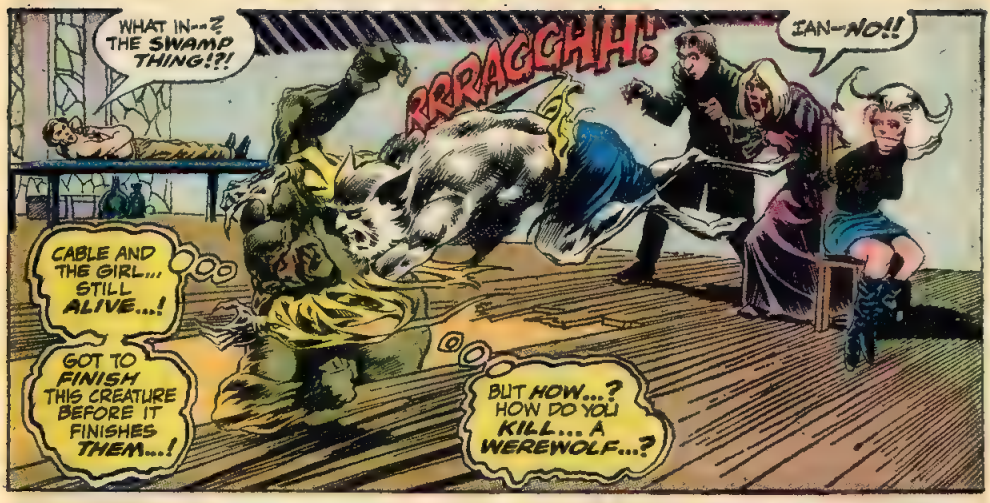
MOTHER--NO! YE CAN'NA DO IT! IT'S HORRIBLE--INSANE!
EVEN IF HE SURVIVES, D'YE REALIZE WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO HIM?
I DON'T CARE ABOUT HIM, SON... I CARE ABOUT YOU!

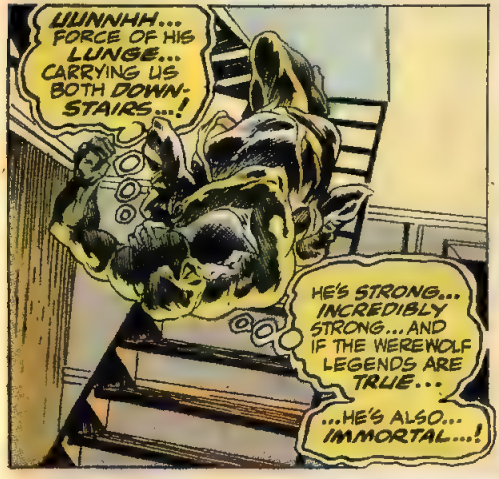

"WHY ELSE D'YE THINK WE STRUNG THOSE LANTERNS IN THE STORM..."
"--TO GIVE THE APPEARANCE OF A RUNWAY BELOW..."

"D'YE KNOW HOW MANY PLANES BELIEVED THOSE GLOWING LIES..."
"...AND PAID THE PRICE OF THEIR BELIEF ON THE COLD AND FOGGY FEN..."
"WE'D HAVE PERFORMED THE TRANSFUSION LONG AGO, SON--BUT NOBODY EVER SURVIVED THOSE DREADFUL WRECKS..."
"...UNTIL NOW..."
"WE BURIED THE POOR UNFORTUNATES--AND THE PIECES OF THEIR PLANES--DEEP IN THE BOG...AN' KEPT WAITING...WAITING..."
AND NOW OUR WAITIN'S DONE!
NO--YOU CAN'T--!
SNAP!
SON--YE DO'NA UNDERSTAND--!
NO--IT'S YOU WHO DO'NA UNDERSTAND--!
HOW COULD YOU?
YOU'VE NEVER FELT THE MOONLIGHT--BURNIN' DEEP IN YER FLESH--!
NEVER FELT YER BODY CHANGE--MUSCLES TWISTING--PULLING--!
NEVER FELT THE BLOOD-LUST--AARRGH--RAGIN' INSIDE YE--LIKE A FIRE OUT OF CONTROL--!
PLEASE--AARRGHH--YE CAN'NA DO IT--! YE CANNA INFECT AN INNOCENT--ARRGHH--WITH THE CURSE THAT TURNS ME INTO...

--THIS!!
IAN--
NO!!
CONTINUED ON 2 BE PAGE FOLLOWING.

ABIGAIL'S EYES GROW WIDE WITH FEAR AS SHE WATCHES THE LAST VESTIGES OF HUMANITY DRAIN FROM THE FACE OF THE SHAGGY HORROR THAT CONFRONTS HER...
TO BE REPLACED BY THE GLEAM OF PURE ANIMAL LUST...
...AND HUNGER...
...A HUNGER THAT WILL NOT BE DENIED...
IAN--NO!! NOT HERE... NOT NOW!!
STOP HIM, ANGUS! FER PITY'S SAKE--STOP HIM!!
THE QUESTION IS-- HOW?
AND THE ANSWER COMES LOOMING THROUGH THE ATTIC'S OLD TRAPDOOR...
...A PORTAL FAR TOO SMALL TO CONTAIN SUCH MONSTROUS BULK...
SPENT ALMOST A DAY... CLAWING FREE OF THE QUICKSAND...
...THEN FOLLOWING THE BEAST'S TRACKS... HERE...!
...BUT HAVE I ARRIVED... TOO LATE...?
RRRGHHH


WHAT IN--? THE SWAMP THING!?!
RRRAGGHH!
IAN--NO!!
CABLE AND THE GIRL... STILL ALIVE...!
GOT TO FINISH THIS CREATURE BEFORE IT FINISHES THEM...!
BUT HOW...? HOW DO YOU KILL... A WEREWOLF...?


UUNNHH... FORCE OF HIS LUNGE... CARRYING US BOTH DOWN-STAIRS...!
HE'S STRONG... INCREDIBLY STRONG... AND IF THE WEREWOLF LEGENDS ARE TRUE...
...HE'S ALSO... IMMORTAL...!

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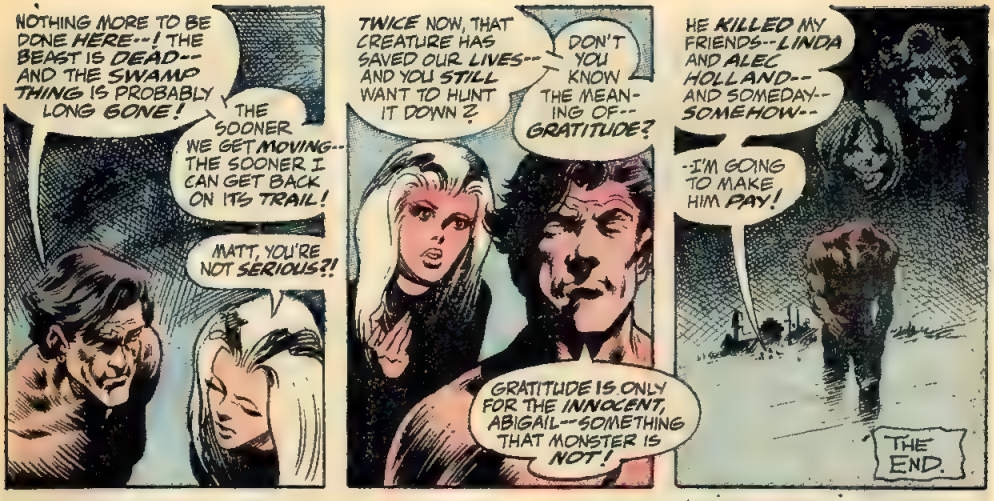
...THE CEILING...!
UNLESS MY MOSSY CONDITION HAS AFFECTED MY EYESIGHT... THIS CHANDELIER IS TRIMMED WITH... SILVER...!
THEY MUST HAVE FORGOTTEN ABOUT IT...
...OR FIGURED THAT NO ONE COULD POSSIBLY... USE IT AS A WEAPON...
...BUT THEY FIGURED... WRONG...!
KWA-RRAAM
THIS SHOULD HOLD HIM BACK... TILL I CAN THINK OF SOMETHING... MORE EFFECTIVE...!
PLEASE-- NO! DO'NA HURT MY BOY--!
THE ANXIOUS JENNA MacCOBB REACHES HER TRANSFORMED SON--AS THE ALREADY-WEAKENED CHANDELIER CHAIN DECIDES TO...
SNAP!
THERE IS TIME FOR ONLY ONE MOTION...
...BUT IS IT THE WEREWOLF-- OR THE MAN WITHIN-- WHO PUSHES THE OLD WOMAN OUT OF HARM'S WAY!...
21

...THEN EXPLODES INTO THE NIGHT...
CRASH
IAN? IAN, SON--WHY'D YE DO IT?
WHY DESTROY YERSELF TO SAVE ME--?
M-MOTHER--?
OH, IAN--I'M AN OLD LADY--MY TIME IS ALMOST DONE--
--BUT YOU HAD...
I HAD NOTHING--BUT AN ETERNAL HELL--LIVING IN FEAR OF THE MOON--
--ALWAYS DREADING THE MOMENT THE BEAST THAT I AM WOULD TURN ON SOMEONE I LOVE--!
NO, MOTHER, BELIEVE ME--IT'S BETTER THIS WAY...
...MUCH... BETTER...
IAN--? OH, IAN--!
SLEEP WELL, MY SON--SLEEP WELL!


NOTHING MORE TO BE DONE HERE--! THE BEAST IS DEAD-- AND THE SWAMP THING IS PROBABLY LONG GONE!
THE SOONER WE GET MOVING-- THE SOONER I CAN GET BACK ON ITS TRAIL!
MATT, YOU'RE NOT SERIOUS?!
TWICE NOW, THAT CREATURE HAS SAVED OUR LIVES-- AND YOU STILL WANT TO HUNT IT DOWN?
DON'T YOU KNOW THE MEANING OF-- GRATITUDE?
GRATITUDE IS ONLY FOR THE INNOCENT, ABIGAIL--SOMETHING THAT MONSTER IS NOT!
HE KILLED MY FRIENDS--LINDA AND ALEC HOLLAND-- AND SOMEDAY-- SOMEHOW--
--I'M GOING TO MAKE HIM PAY!
THE END.

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FOR STORIES THAT ARE Different,
FOR PICTURES THAT ARE DARING!
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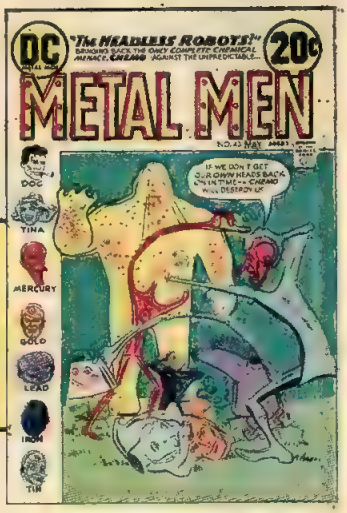

SWAMP
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IT WAS LARABEE ON NIGHT WATCH WHO FIRST NOTICED THE STOWAWAY LEANING ON THE GUARD-RAIL, HIS TOPCOAT BUNDLED TIGHTLY AGAINST THE BRISK PRE-DAWN CHILL...
THE LAST OF THE RAVENWIND WITCHES!
"A BIG 'UN," THOUGHT LARABEE AS HE QUIETLY GATHERED THE CREW. "HE'S LIABLE TO GIVE US TROUBLE!"
LARABEE WAS A MASTER OF UNDER-STATEMENT!
THEY'VE DISCOVERED ME...! TOPCOAT WON'T HELP ME... NOW..!
HELP! HELP! WE GOT A MONSTER ON DECK!
A LEN WEIN BERNI WRIGHTSON JOE ORLANDO PRESENTATION!

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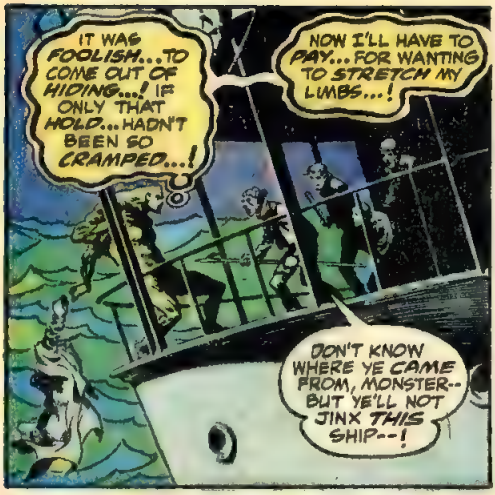
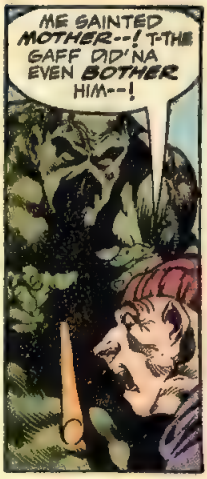

IT WAS FOOLISH...TO COME OUT OF HIDING...! IF ONLY THAT HOLD...HADN'T BEEN SO CRAMPED...!
NOW I'LL HAVE TO PAY... FOR WANTING TO STRETCH MY LIMBS...!
DON'T KNOW WHERE YE CAME FROM, MONSTER-- BUT YE'LL NOT JINX THIS SHIP--!

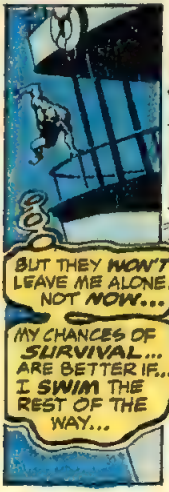
WE'LL SEND YE BACK TO THE ARMS OF NEPTUNE FIRST!
CHUK!

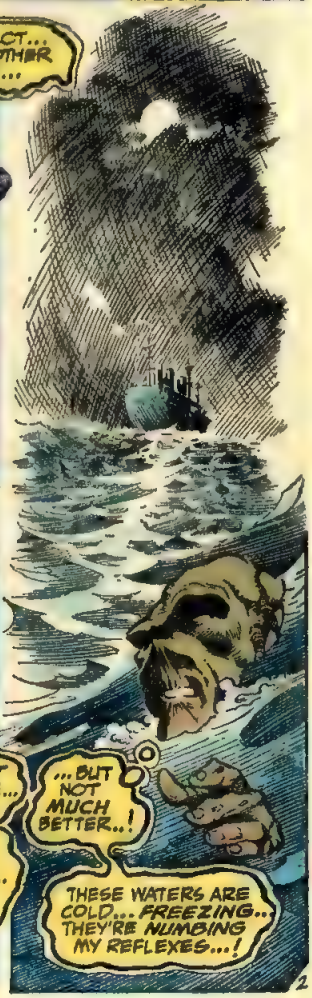

ME SAINTED MOTHER--! T-THE GAFF DID'NA EVEN BOTHER HIM--!

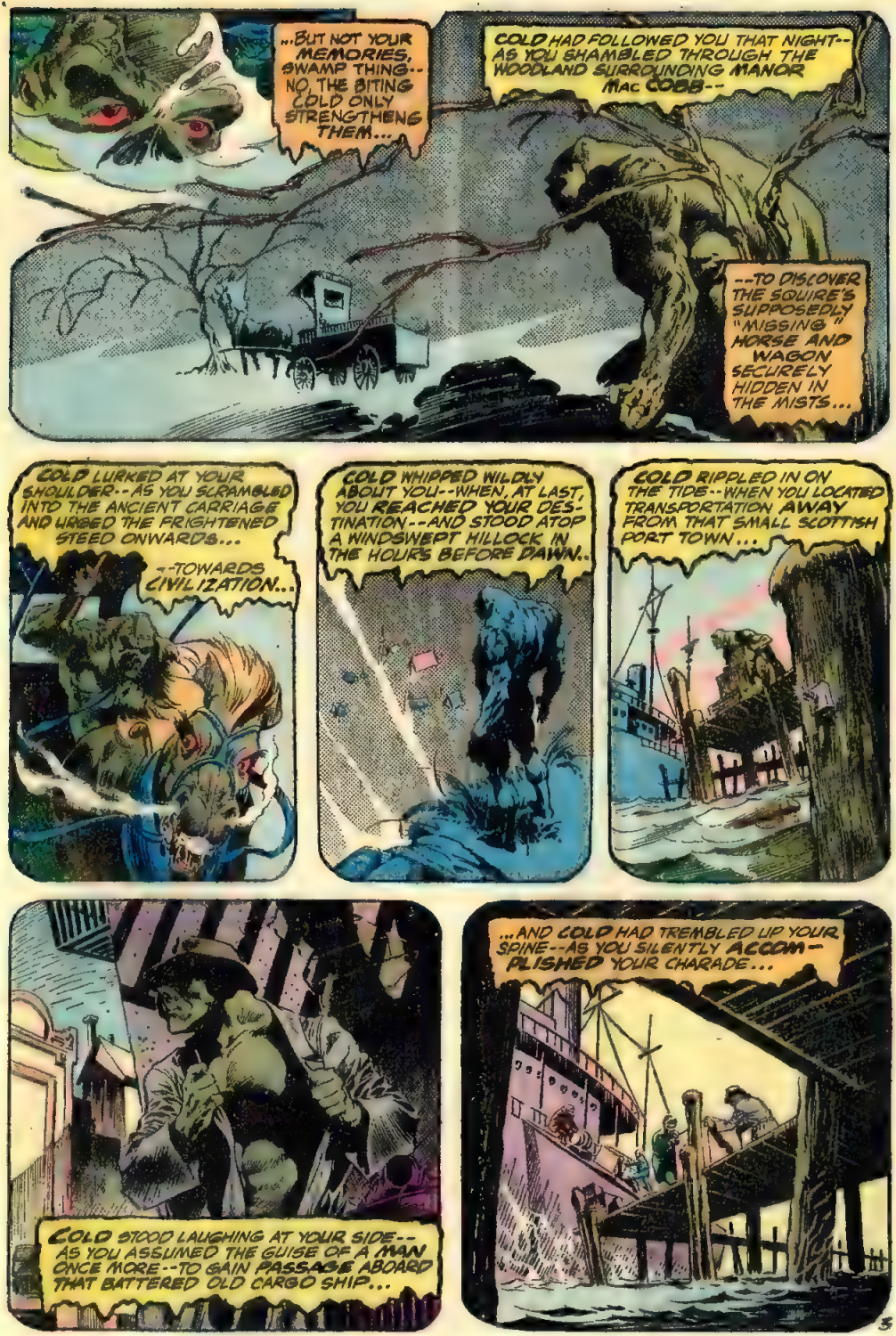
YOU'RE WRONG, MY FRIEND...IT BOTHERED ME ALL RIGHT...

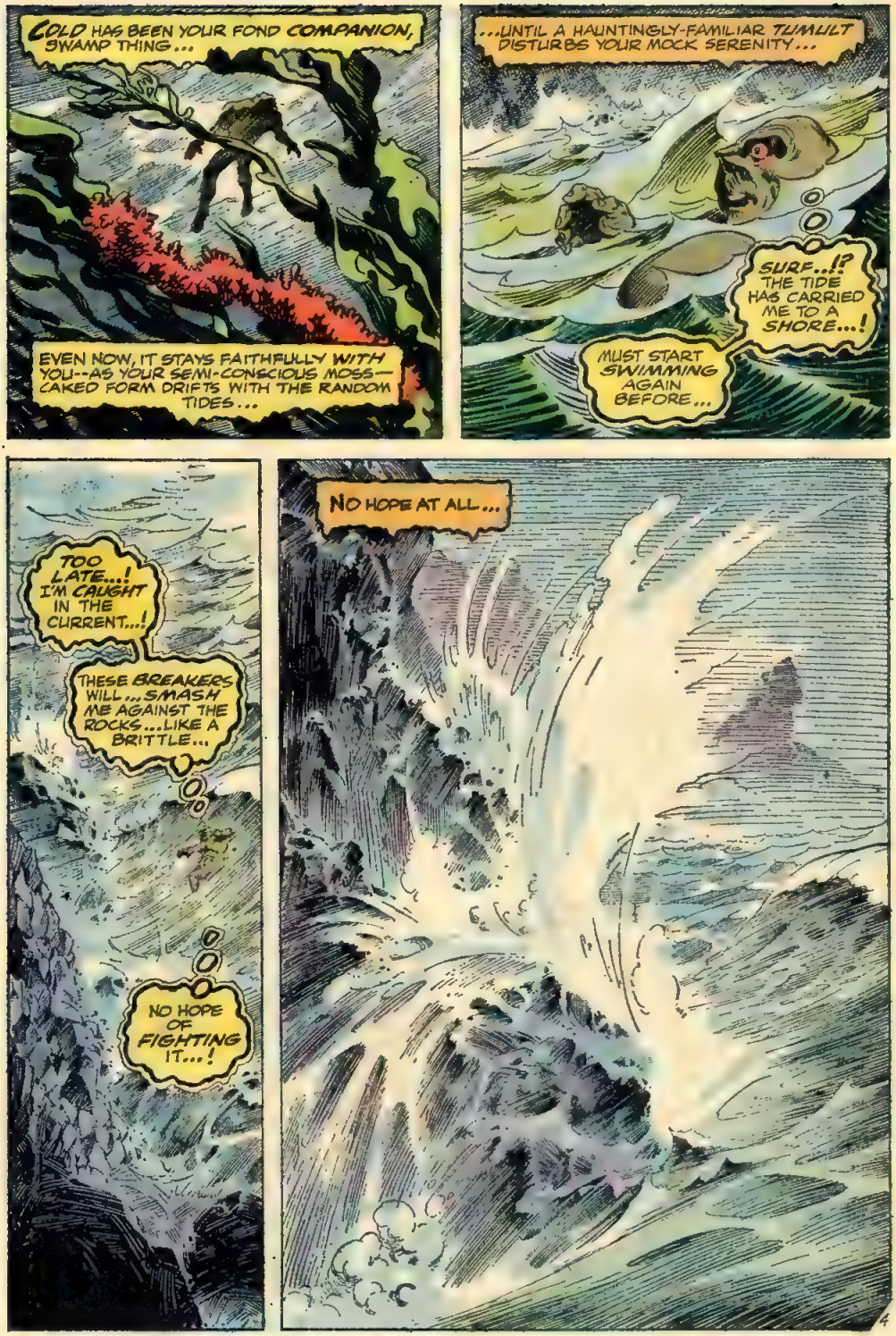
...IN FACT... YOU BOTHER ME...

...BUT YOU'RE NOT WORTH...BOTHERING ABOUT IN TURN...!
SO WHY NOT JUST...LEAVE ME ALONE...?


BUT THEY WON'T LEAVE ME ALONE... NOT NOW...
MY CHANCES OF SURVIVAL... ARE BETTER IF... I SWIM THE REST OF THE WAY...

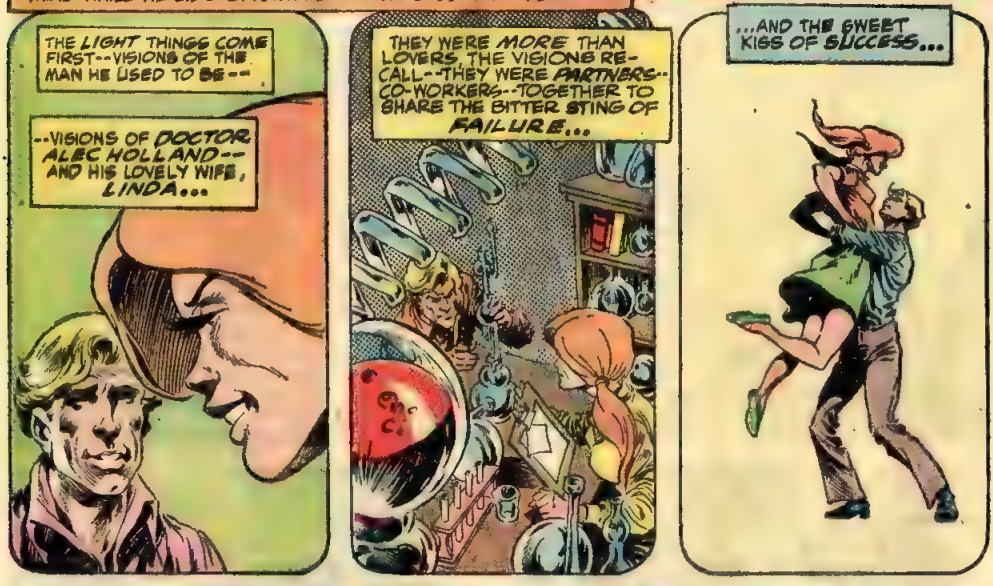

...BUT NOT MUCH BETTER..!
THESE WATERS ARE COLD... FREEZING... THEY'RE NUMBING MY REFLEXES...!

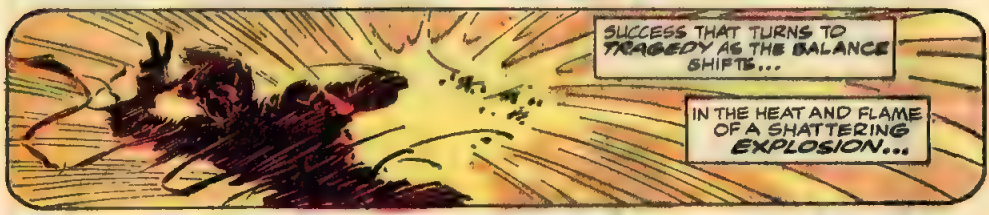

...BUT NOT YOUR MEMORIES, SWAMP THING--NO, THE BITING COLD ONLY STRENGTHENS THEM...
COLD HAD FOLLOWED YOU THAT NIGHT--AS YOU SHAMBLED THROUGH THE WOODLAND SURROUNDING MAC COBB MANOR--
--TO DISCOVER THE SQUIRE'S SUPPOSEDLY "MISSING" HORSE AND WAGON SECURELY HIDDEN IN THE MISTS...
COLD LURKED AT YOUR SHOULDER--AS YOU SCRAMBLED INTO THE ANCIENT CARRIAGE AND URGED THE FRIGHTENED STEED ONWARDS...
--TOWARDS CIVILIZATION...
COLD WHIPPED WILDLY ABOUT YOU--WHEN, AT LAST, YOU REACHED YOUR DESTINATION--AND STOOD ATOP A WINDSWEPT HILLOCK IN THE HOURS BEFORE DAWN..
COLD RIPPLED IN ON THE TIDE--WHEN YOU LOCATED TRANSPORTATION AWAY FROM THAT SMALL SCOTTISH PORT TOWN...
COLD STOOD LAUGHING AT YOUR SIDE--AS YOU ASSUMED THE GUISE OF A MAN ONCE MORE--TO GAIN PASSAGE ABOARD THAT BATTERED OLD CARGO SHIP...
...AND COLD HAD TREMBLED UP YOUR SPINE--AS YOU SILENTLY ACCOMPLISHED YOUR CHARADE...

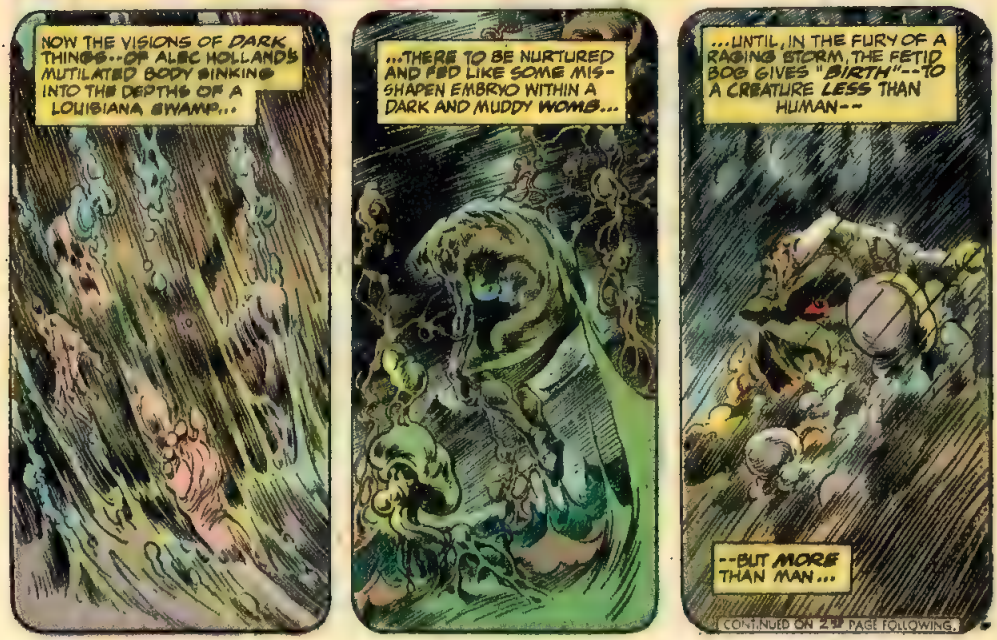

COLD HAS BEEN YOUR FOND COMPANION, SWAMP THING...
EVEN NOW, IT STAYS FAITHFULLY WITH YOU--AS YOUR SEMI-CONSCIOUS MOSS-CAKED FORM DRIFTS WITH THE RANDOM TIDES...
...UNTIL A HAUNTINGLY-FAMILIAR TUMULT DISTURBS YOUR MOCK SERENITY...
SURF..!? THE TIDE HAS CARRIED ME TO A SHORE...!
MUST START SWIMMING AGAIN BEFORE...
TOO LATE...! I'M CAUGHT IN THE CURRENT...!
THESE BREAKERS WILL...SMASH ME AGAINST THE ROCKS...LIKE A BRITTLE...
NO HOPE OF FIGHTING IT...!
NO HOPE AT ALL...
4

BUT THE ETERNAL POUNDING OF NATURE'S BRINY WONDER IS ONLY A RUMBLING WHISPER TO THE TWO BREATHLESS FIGURES WHO RACE DESPERATELY THROUGH THE NEARBY SHADOWED WOODS...
FASTER, BROTHER-- FASTER! GIDEON AND THE OTHERS WILL SOON BE UPON US!
BUT I'M SO TIRED OF RUNNING, SISTER--
AND MY FEET ARE BEGINNING TO HURT--!
OH, LOOK-- A SECRET CAVE!
WE CAN HIDE THERE-- AND THE BAD MEN WILL NEVER FIND US!
PERHAPS... IT'S A CHANCE!
SEE, SISTER-- I TOLD YOU--!
THEY'LL NEVER FIND US-- NEVER--!
HUSH, CHILD-- NOT A SOUND! IF THEY HEAR US...
...WE'RE DOOMED!
UUHHNNNNNNNN
THE ROCKS... THE SURF... BATTER ME MERCILESSLY...
...AND NOW I'M SEEING... VISIONS...!
...BUT VISIONS CAN'T... HELP ME...
THUD!
5

VISIONS--A BALANCE BETWEEN DARKNESS AND LIGHT--TUMBLE THROUGH THE MAN-MONSTER'S MIND WHILE HE LIES SPRAWLED ON THE COLD CAVE FLOOR...

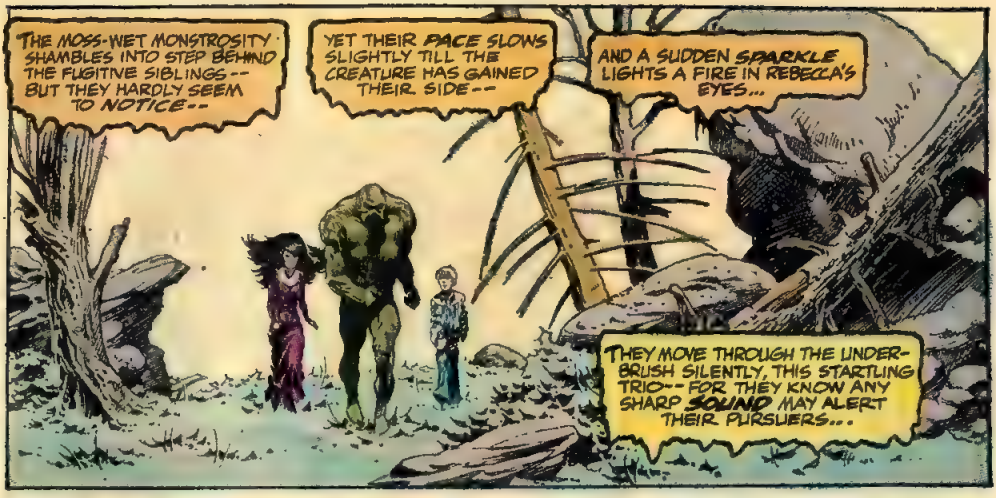

THE LIGHT THINGS COME FIRST--VISIONS OF THE MAN HE USED TO BE--
--VISIONS OF DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND--AND HIS LOVELY WIFE, LINDA...
THEY WERE MORE THAN LOVERS, THE VISIONS RECALL--THEY WERE PARTNERS--CO-WORKERS--TOGETHER TO SHARE THE BITTER STING OF FAILURE...
...AND THE SWEET KISS OF SUCCESS...




NOW THE VISIONS OF DARK THINGS--OF ALEC HOLLAND'S MUTILATED BODY SINKING INTO THE DEPTHS OF A LOUISIANA SWAMP...
...THERE TO BE NURTURED AND FED LIKE SOME MIS-SHAPEN EMBRYO WITHIN A DARK AND MUDDY WOMB...
...UNTIL, IN THE FURY OF A RAGING STORM, THE FETID BOG GIVES "BIRTH"--TO A CREATURE LESS THAN HUMAN--
--BUT MORE THAN MAN...

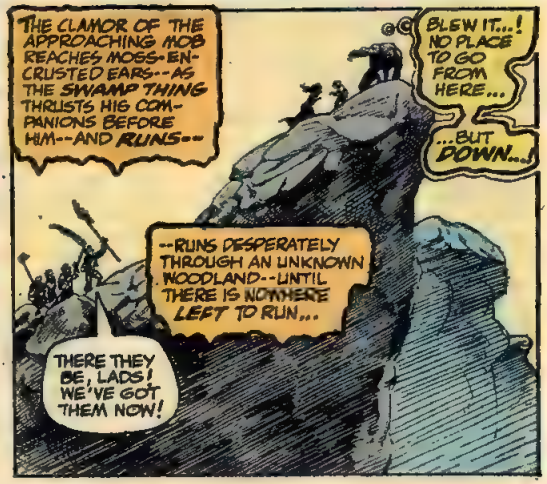
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

AND SUCH THOUGHTS ARE ENOUGH TO AWAKEN ANYONE...
WHA...THE GIRL...! THEN SHE WASN'T A VISION...!
I CAN SEE BEWILDERMENT IN YOUR EYES, MY STRANGE FRIEND--BUT YOU NEEDN'T BE ALARMED--!
WE'RE REALLY QUITE SAFE HERE!
MY NAME IS REBECCA RAVEN-WIND! MY BROTHER IS CALLED TIMOTHY!
WE'VE BEEN HIDING HERE TO ESCAPE A MAN NAMED GIDEON AND HIS FOLLOWERS!
YOU SEE--THEY SAY I'M A WITCH!
THAT ISN'T TRUE, OF COURSE! I REALLY ONLY TEND A SMALL FARM--AND CARE FOR MY BROTHER!
HE'S A LITTLE--er--SIMPLE, YOU MIGHT SAY!
GIDEON SHOULD BE GONE BY NOW--AND TIMOTHY AND I MUST FIND OUR WAY AWAY FROM HERE!
GOODBYE, MY STRANGE, SILENT FRIEND--MAY IT BE WELL WITH YOU!
NO, REBECCA... NOT GOODBYE...!
NOT UNTIL I REPAY THE DEBT... I OWE YOU...!
YOU LOOKED AFTER ME... WHEN I NEEDED HELP...
...NOW IT'S MY TURN... TO LOOK AFTER YOU...!


THE MOSS-WET MONSTROSITY SHAMBLES INTO STEP BEHIND THE FUGITIVE SIBLINGS--BUT THEY HARDLY SEEM TO NOTICE--
YET THEIR PACE SLOWS SLIGHTLY TILL THE CREATURE HAS GAINED THEIR SIDE--
AND A SUDDEN SPARKLE LIGHTS A FIRE IN REBECCA'S EYES...
THEY MOVE THROUGH THE UNDERBRUSH SILENTLY, THIS STARTLING TRIO--FOR THEY KNOW ANY SHARP SOUND MAY ALERT THEIR PURSUERS...

SNAPT!

...ANY SOUND AT ALL!
OVER THERE, LADS--WE'VE FOUND THEM!

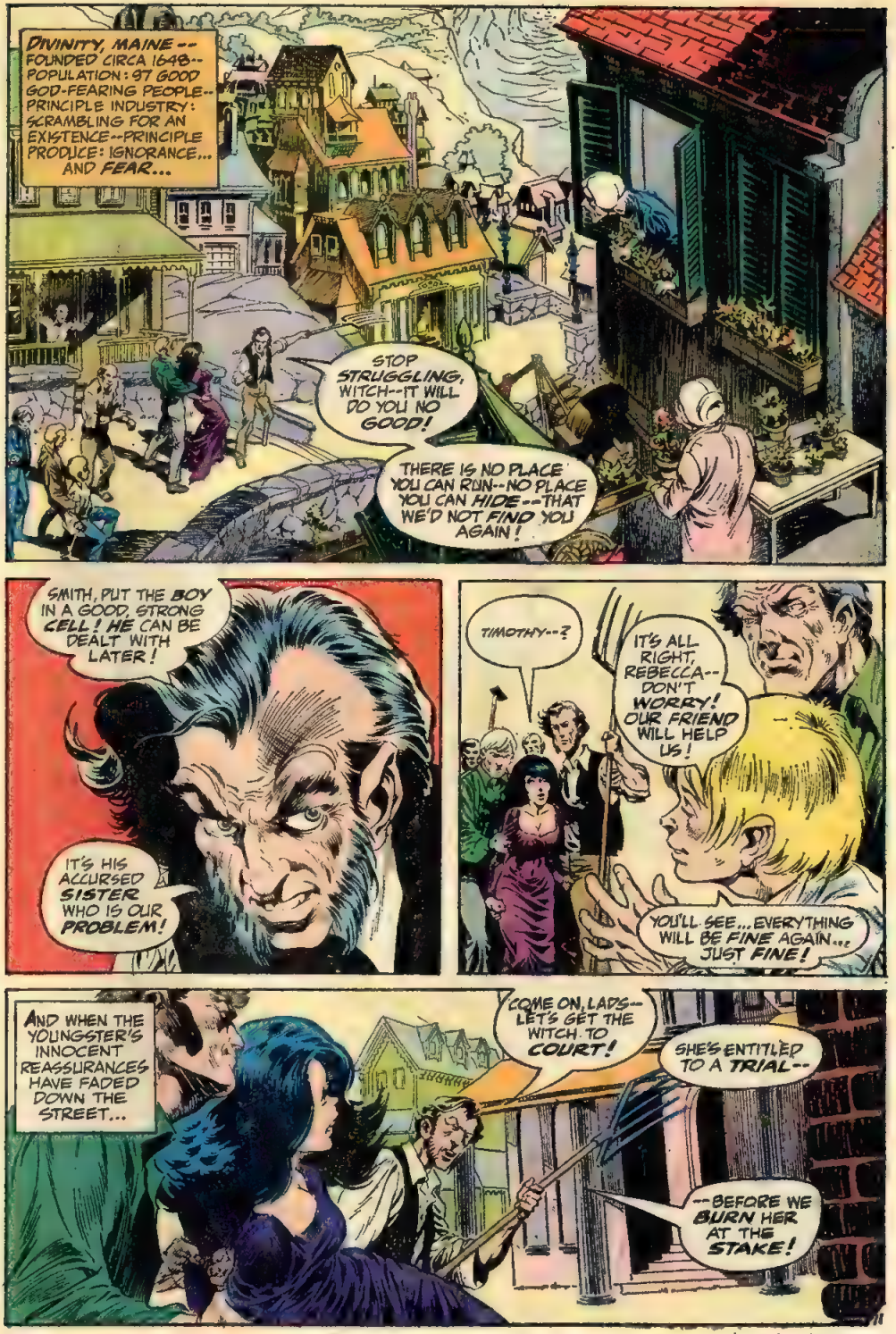

THE CLAMOR OF THE APPROACHING MOB REACHES MOSS-ENCRUSTED EARS--AS THE SWAMP THING THRUSTS HIS COMPANIONS BEFORE HIM--AND RUNS--
BLEW IT...! NO PLACE TO GO FROM HERE...
...BUT DOWN...!
--RUNS DESPERATELY THROUGH AN UNKNOWN WOODLAND--UNTIL THERE IS NOWHERE LEFT TO RUN...
THERE THEY BE, LADS! WE'VE GOT THEM NOW!

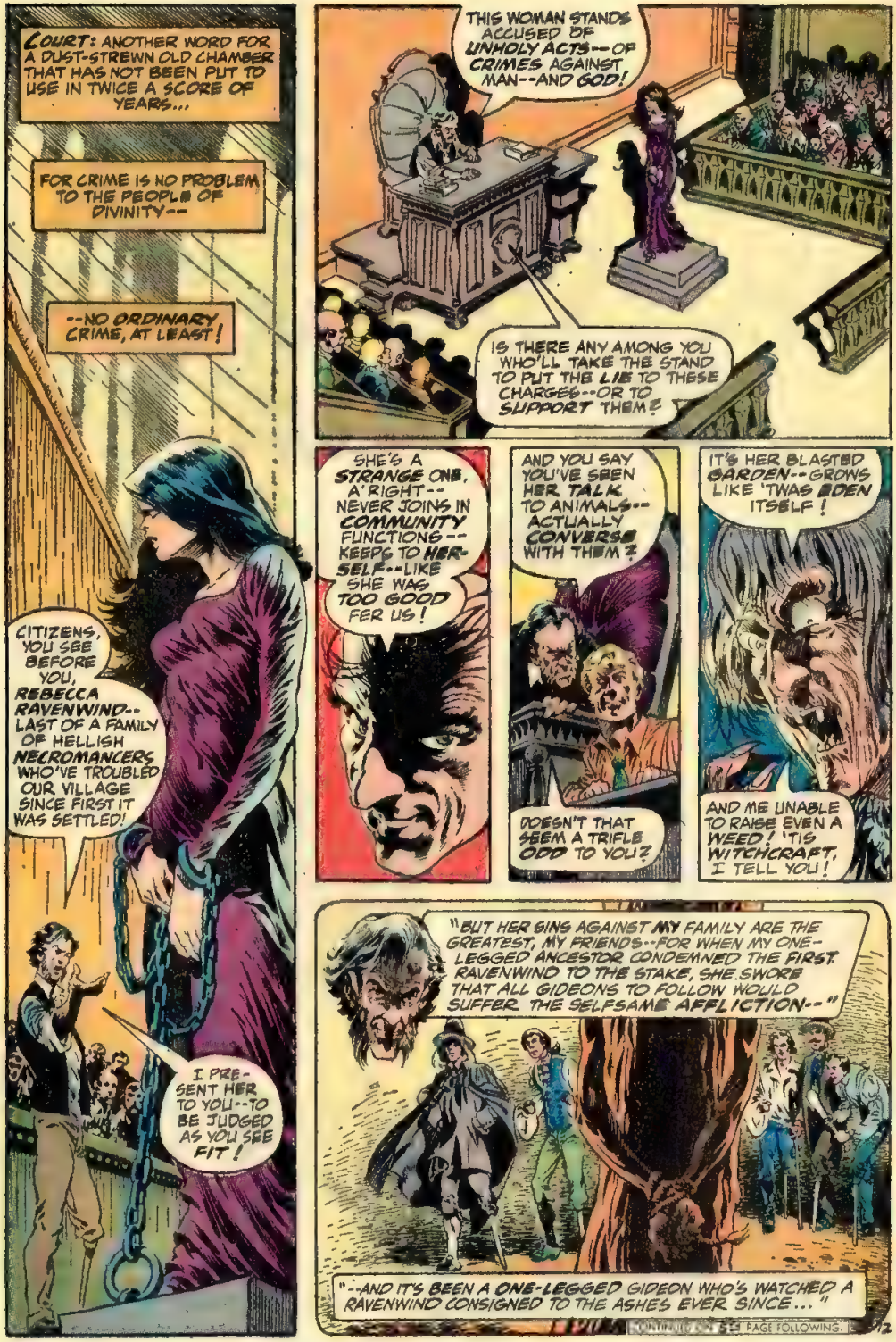
LOOK FOR YOURSELVES, LADS! SHE BE A WITCH BY THUNDER--!
SHE'S SUMMONED UP A THING FROM HELL TO PROTECT HER FROM OUR RIGHTEOUS WRATH!

WELL, NO SPAWN OF SATAN WILL PROTECT THAT LITTLE VIXEN FROM JOCKO, BOYS!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING
8

I DON'T WANT TO... HURT YOU, JOCKO... BUT IF YOU DON'T... PUT DOWN THAT SCYTHE... I'M GOING TO...
KRAK!
NO, DEMON-- YOU WON'T LAY YOUR FILTHY HANDS ON JOCKO!
IN FACT, I'LL FIX IT SO YOU DON'T LAY THOSE HANDS ON ANYBODY EVER AGAIN--!
SWACT
DEAR LORD...! HE CUT OFF MY ARM... AND I DIDN'T EVEN FEEL IT...!
THERE, DEMON-- HOW WILL YOU SPREAD YOUR EVIL NOW?
EVIL...? I'LL SHOW YOU EVIL, JOCKO...!
WHEN YOU WAKE UP... TAKE A GOOD LOOK... IN THE MIRROR...!
YOU'LL SEE... ALL THE EVIL YOU CAN STAND...!

JOCKO HAS FAILED US, LADS--BUT DO NOT LOSE HEART! WE ARE NOT BEATEN YET!
NOW, SMITH--THROW YOUR LANTERN--
--AND WE WILL CONSIGN THE DEMON TO THE FLAMES WHENCE IT WAS SUMMONED!
FOOLS... WHAT ARE THEY DOING...?
CRASH!
THE MAN-MONSTER'S ANSWER IS A RAGING WALL OF FIRE THAT SPRINGS TO LIFE BEFORE HIM...
FILLING THE AIR WITH ACRID SMOKE--BLISTERING HEAT--AND MORE--
--MUCH MORE...
MEMORIES: THE PAINFUL IMAGE OF A TORTURED ALEC HOLLAND RIPPLES IN THE SWIFTLY-MOVING FLAMES...
--AND IN THAT INSTANT, THE SWAMP THING RECALLS THE AGONY OF UNCLASSIFIED CHEMICALS SEEPING INTO HIS FLESH--
--AND IN HORROR, TAKES A SINGLE STEP BACKWARDS--
A SINGLE--FATAL--STEP...
HUH...? CLIFF EDGE... CRUMBLING UNDER MY WEIGHT...!
FALLING INTO THE SEA AGAIN...
...AND THIS TIME...I MAY NOT SURVIVE...!
AND THE CRASHING WAVES ECHO THE SWAMP THING'S THOUGHT...
YOUR HELL-BORN SERVANT IS GONE, REBECCA RAVENWIND--THERE IS NOTHING TO KEEP YOU FROM US NOW!
TAKE THEM TO THE VILLAGE, LADS--AND LET JUSTICE BE DONE!


DIVINITY, MAINE -- FOUNDED CIRCA 1648-- POPULATION: 97 GOOD GOD-FEARING PEOPLE-- PRINCIPLE INDUSTRY: SCRAMBLING FOR AN EXISTENCE--PRINCIPLE PRODUCE: IGNORANCE... AND FEAR...
STOP STRUGGLING, WITCH--IT WILL DO YOU NO GOOD!
THERE IS NO PLACE YOU CAN RUN--NO PLACE YOU CAN HIDE--THAT WE'D NOT FIND YOU AGAIN!
SMITH, PUT THE BOY IN A GOOD, STRONG CELL! HE CAN BE DEALT WITH LATER!
IT'S HIS ACCURSED SISTER WHO IS OUR PROBLEM!
TIMOTHY--?
IT'S ALL RIGHT, REBECCA-- DON'T WORRY! OUR FRIEND WILL HELP US!
YOU'LL SEE... EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE AGAIN... JUST FINE!
AND WHEN THE YOUNGSTER'S INNOCENT REASSURANCES HAVE FADED DOWN THE STREET...
COME ON, LADS-- LET'S GET THE WITCH TO COURT!
SHE'S ENTITLED TO A TRIAL--
--BEFORE WE BURN HER AT THE STAKE!


COURT: ANOTHER WORD FOR A DUST-STREWN OLD CHAMBER THAT HAS NOT BEEN PUT TO USE IN TWICE A SCORE OF YEARS...
FOR CRIME IS NO PROBLEM TO THE PEOPLE OF DIVINITY--
--NO ORDINARY CRIME, AT LEAST!
CITIZENS, YOU SEE BEFORE YOU, REBECCA RAVENWIND--LAST OF A FAMILY OF HELLISH NECROMANCERS WHO'VE TROUBLED OUR VILLAGE SINCE FIRST IT WAS SETTLED!
I PRESENT HER TO YOU--TO BE JUDGED AS YOU SEE FIT!
THIS WOMAN STANDS ACCUSED OF UNHOLY ACTS--OF CRIMES AGAINST MAN--AND GOD!
IS THERE ANY AMONG YOU WHO'LL TAKE THE STAND TO PUT THE LIE TO THESE CHARGES--OR TO SUPPORT THEM?
SHE'S A STRANGE ONE, A'RIGHT--NEVER JOINS IN COMMUNITY FUNCTIONS--KEEPS TO HERSELF--LIKE SHE WAS TOO GOOD FER US!
AND YOU SAY YOU'VE SEEN HER TALK TO ANIMALS--ACTUALLY CONVERSE WITH THEM?
DOESN'T THAT SEEM A TRIFLE ODD TO YOU?
IT'S HER BLASTED GARDEN--GROWS LIKE 'TWAS EDEN ITSELF!
AND ME UNABLE TO RAISE EVEN A WEED! 'TIS WITCHCRAFT, I TELL YOU!
"BUT HER SINS AGAINST MY FAMILY ARE THE GREATEST, MY FRIENDS--FOR WHEN MY ONE-LEGGED ANCESTOR CONDEMNED THE FIRST RAVENWIND TO THE STAKE, SHE SWORE THAT ALL GIDEONS TO FOLLOW WOULD SUFFER THE SELFSAME AFFLICTION--"
"--AND IT'S BEEN A ONE-LEGGED GIDEON WHO'S WATCHED A RAVENWIND CONSIGNED TO THE ASHES EVER SINCE..."
CONTINUED ON PAGE FOLLOWING
12

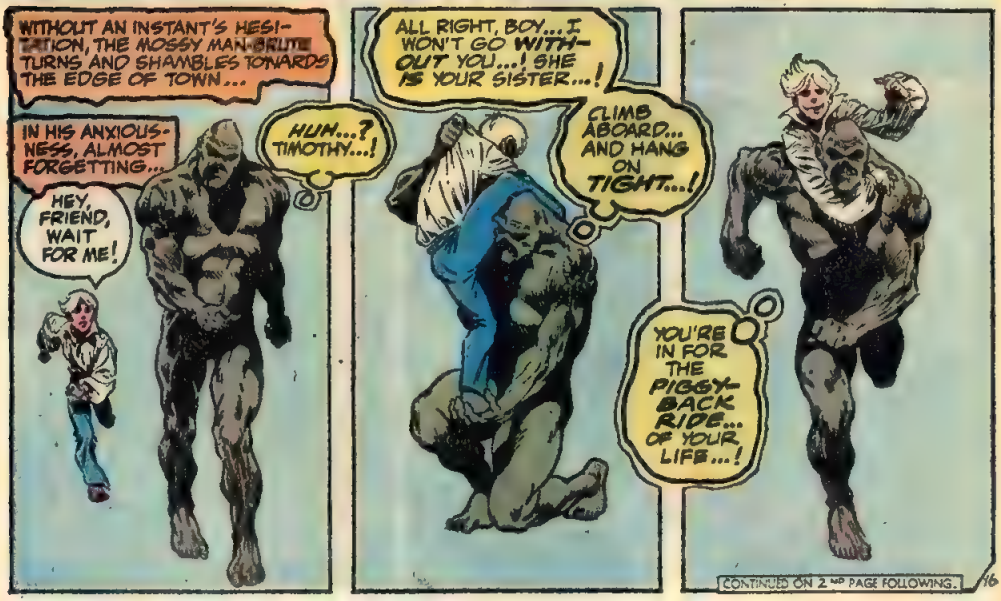
I STAND BEFORE YOU NOW ON A LIMB OF WHITTLED WOOD BECAUSE OF HER FAMILY'S SORCERY--
--AND I SAY YOU THERE MUST BE AN END TO IT--NOW AND FOREVER!
THE CURSE LAID UPON US MUST BE PUT TO REST BEFORE--!
GIVE ME THE CHILD, WOMAN!
NO--YOU MUSTN'T--!
CONFOUND YOU, WOMAN--I SAID HAND ME THE CHILD!
NO--PLEASE--NO!
THERE, PEOPLE OF DIVINITY--NEED YOU ANY FURTHER PROOF?
DO YOU SEE WHAT THE RAVENWINDS' WITCHCRAFT HAS DONE TO MY SON--?
--WHAT IT WILL DO TO MY SON'S SON--AND HIS SON THEREAFTER--UNLESS WE PUT A STOP TO IT!
WITH THE DEATH OF REBECCA, THE RAVENWIND LINE IS FINISHED--ITS CURSE FOREVER BROKEN!
WITH THE EVIDENCE BEFORE YOU, IS THERE ANY OTHER VERDICT YOU CAN GIVE?
GUILTY! BURN HER! GUILTY!
BURN THE WITCH!

WHILE, BY THE TURBULENT SEACOAST, A MOSSY CHUNK OF UNWANTED FLOTSAM IS CAST VIOLENTLY UPON THE SHORE...
FEEL LIKE A... USED SPONGE...! SO WEAK MY ARMS... CAN BARELY SUPPORT ME...!
MY ARMS...?
DEAR LORD... MY SEVERED ARM... HAS BEGUN TO GROW BACK...!
THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA... IN MY SYSTEM... IN THE LAB... IT CAUSES RAPID REGENERATION... OF PLANT-LIFE...
...AND PLANT-LIFE IS EXACTLY... WHAT I'VE BECOME...!
AMAZING...! MY ARM IS REFORMING... EVEN AS I WATCH...!
...THICKER... STRONGER... DUPLICATING WHAT I'D LOST...
...ROOTS... MOSS... MINGLING TOGETHER...
...EVERY-THING JUST AS IT WAS BEFORE!
...I'M WHOLE AGAIN... IN A MATTER OF MINUTES...
...AND, GOD, IT FEELS GOOD...! STRENGTH SURGING THROUGH MY BODY...
...STRENGTH TO BE... PUT TO USE...
...FOR, UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS... THERE'S A TOWN NEARBY...
...AND I HAVE SOME... UN-FINISHED BUSINESS... TO ATTEND TO...!

"BOYS WILL BE BOYS," THE TIRED OLD ADAGE GOES. THE FACES CHANGE FROM YEAR TO YEAR-- BUT THE ATTITUDES ARE CONSTANT. BOYS ARE ENERGETIC...IMPRESSIONABLE... MISCHIEVOUS... AND VERY OFTEN CRUEL.
HEY, MY DAD WAS RIGHT! THIS GUY IS A DOPE!
JUST LOOK'A HIS FACE--! HE'S OFF IN DREAMLAND SOMEWHERE!
THERE IS ALSO A PROVERB ABOUT "THE SINS OF THE FATHER..." BUT WE NEED NOT GO INTO THAT HERE...
MY DAD TOLD ME ALL ABOUT YOU AND YOUR SISTER, PANSY-FACE--
--AND WE'RE GONNA SHOW YA WHAT HAPPENS TO WITCHES IN THIS TOWN!
WON'T WE, FELLAS?
WON'T WE...
GULP!
CRASH
IT'S ALL RIGHT, TIMOTHY... I'M HERE NOW...!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF YOU...!
I'LL TAKE CARE OF... EVERYTHING...!
NOW STAND AWAY FROM... THE WALL...

...AND I'LL GET YOU... OUT OF THAT STINKING HOLE...!
R'RRAKKK-UMPH!

YOUR SISTER, TIMOTHY... TELL ME... WHERE HAVE THEY... TAKEN HER...?
THANK YOU, FRIEND-- I KNEW YOU'D COME BACK TO HELP US!
IF WE HURRY, WE CAN STILL SAVE REBECCA! THEY'VE TAKEN HER TO THE HILLS BEYOND TOWN TO BURN HER!


WITHOUT AN INSTANT'S HESI-TATION, THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE TURNS AND SHAMBLES TOWARDS THE EDGE OF TOWN...
IN HIS ANXIOUS-NESS, ALMOST FORGETTING...
HEY, FRIEND, WAIT FOR ME!
HUH...? TIMOTHY...!
ALL RIGHT, BOY... I WON'T GO WITH-OUT YOU...! SHE IS YOUR SISTER...!
CLIMB ABOARD... AND HANG ON TIGHT...!
YOU'RE IN FOR THE PIGGY-BACK RIDE... OF YOUR LIFE...!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.
16

THE RAGGED HILLTOP STANDS A GOODLY DISTANCE AWAY FROM FAIR DIVINITY--FAR ENOUGH THAT THE VILLAGE AIR WILL NOT BE TAINTED BY CRUDE THREATS AND OBSCENITIES--
--OR THE ODOR OF BURNING FLESH...
REBECCA RAVENWIND, YOU HAVE BEEN TRIED AND FOUND GUILTY OF THE UNHOLY CRIME OF--WITCHCRAFT--
--AND SO, HAVE BEEN SENTENCED TO THE STAKE! HAVE YOU ANYTHING TO SAY?
PLEASE--THIS IS INSANITY!
I'M INNOCENT, GIDEON--I'VE DONE NOTHING TO YOU!
YOU CAN'T BLAME ME FOR YOUR FAMILY'S GENETIC DEFORMITY--!
CAN'T I, WOMAN? THE FORCE THAT CRIPPLES THE GIDEONS COMES NOT FROM OUR MAKER BUT FROM YOU--
--AND YOU ARE THE ONE WHO SHALL PAY FOR--!
EH? THAT COMMOTION--! WHAT IS--?
FOUND HER...AND JUST IN TIME...IT APPEARS...!
GO AHEAD, WOMAN--DENY YOUR WITCHHOOD NOW--
--NOW THAT YOU'VE SUMMONED YOUR DEMON SPAWN ONCE MORE!

PAUSE FOR A MOMENT AND CONSIDER THIS SCENE: A GREAT MOSS-ENCRUSTED BEHEMOTH STRUGGLING SILENTLY AGAINST HALF A SCORE OF WILDLY FANATIC MEN...

A GHASTLY-LOOKING SWAMP THING BATTLING TO SAVE A LIFE THE FINE AND HANDSOME TOWNSFOLK ARE DESPERATE TO TAKE...

CONSIDER THIS SCENE--AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF: WHO REALLY IS THE MONSTER?

AND, ACROSS THE BARREN FIELD, THE OBJECT OF THIS CONFLICT STARES MUTELY AT THE SEARING FLAMES THAT LICK HIGHER AND HIGHER ABOUT HER...

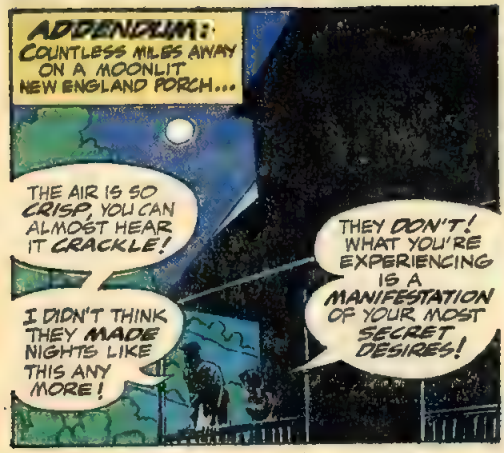
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

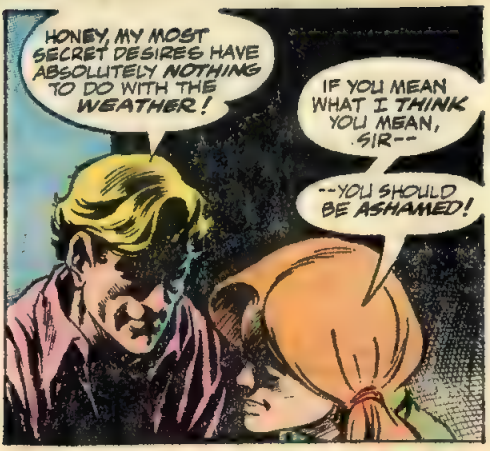
AND THE SWAMP THING BATTLES ON, UNAWARE OF THE DIRE IMMEDIACY OF REBECCA'S PLIGHT...
...UNTIL A SCREAM LIKE SHATTERED CRYSTAL LANCES THE EVENING AIR...
...CATCHING THE ATTENTION OF OTHERS AS WELL...
HAVE TO GET TO HER QUICKLY BEFORE THE FIRE CAN SPREAD...!
NO, MY FRIEND.. GO BACK! IT'S TOO LATE TO SAVE ME--!
THAT REMAINS... TO BE SEEN, REBECCA...! IF I CAN'T... GO THROUGH THE FLAMES...
"...MAYBE I CAN GO... AROUND THEM...!

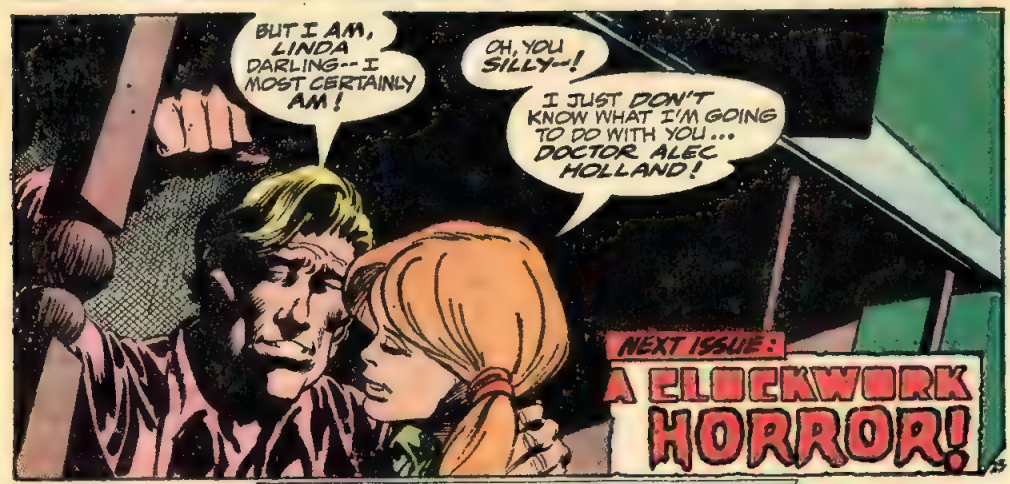
WITH REMARKABLE SPEED FOR ONE WHO SEEMS SO PONDEROUS, THE MIS-SHAPEN MAN-BRUTE SKIRTS THE ROARING FIRE AND...
THERE'LL BE TIME... TO EXTINGUISH THE BLAZE... AFTER I GET... REBECCA TO SAFETY...!
WHHA-RACKK!
NOW... ANY-ONE WHO WANTS TO GET TO REBECCA... WILL HAVE TO... GO THROUGH ME...!
AND I'LL BREAK ANY-ONE WHO... HUH?
IT'S ALL RIGHT, MY FAITHFUL, SILENT FRIEND--
--I'LL TAKE OVER NOW!

HOLD, WITCH--YOUR EVIL MUST NOT ESCAPE THIS PLACE!
MY EVIL? NO, GIDEON--YOU ARE THE ONE WHO IS TRULY EVIL HERE!
YOURS IS THE WORST KIND OF EVIL--THE KIND THAT HOLDS PEOPLE IN IGNORANCE SO THAT YOU CAN MAINTAIN POWER!
YOU'VE SMOTHERED DIVINITY, GIDEON--AS YOUR FAMILY HAS FOR 300 YEARS!
LIAR! YOU'LL DIE FOR THAT!
NO, GIDEON--THERE'S BEEN ENOUGH DEATH IN DIVINITY--
--IT'S TIME THERE WAS AN END TO IT!
REBECCA RAVENWIND CLOSES HER LIMPID EYES--AND THE SKY IS FILLED WITH STORM! GREAT GOUTS OF ELECTRICAL FIRE LEAP ACROSS THE BLACK--THE DEAFENING PEAL OF UNEARTHLY THUNDER SHAKES THE VERY GROUND--
--AND AMID THE TUMULT OF THAT ACCURSED MADNESS, GIDEON AND HIS FOLLOWERS SUDDENLY BEGIN TO--
SCREAM!

THE SCREAMS FADE TO A WHIMPER--THEN A SIGH--AND FINALLY TO SILENCE--AND THE STORM-TOSSED CLOUDS SEEM TO QUIET IN TURN...
I'VE HEARD OF... SUDDEN STORMS BEFORE... BUT THIS ONE... WAS RIDICULOUS...!
SEE, SISTER--I TOLD YOU EVERYTHING WOULD BE FINE! THOSE BAD MAN WILL NEVER BOTHER US AGAIN!
GOOD LORD... THEY'VE ALL BEEN... TURNED INTO FLOWERS...! THEN REBECCA IS...
--A WITCH! THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE THINKING I AM, ISN'T IT, MY FRIEND?
WELL, I'M NOT, YOU KNOW! I DIDN'T LIE TO YOU!
THE POWER'S NOT MINE--IT'S TIMOTHY'S!
I'M WHAT YOU WOULD CALL--HIS FAMILIAR--THE OBJECT HE FOCUSES HIS POWER THROUGH! HE'S SO HARMLESS, I DON'T MIND IT, REALLY!
ALL HE EVER CONJURES UP IS--FLOWERS!
NOW, MY DEAR FRIEND, I'M AFRAID WE MUST LEAVE YOU!
WE HAVE FRIENDS IN BOSTON WHO'LL TAKE CARE OF US! WE NEED NOT BURDEN YOU!
GOODBYE--AND GOD BE WITH YOU!
AND MAY HE... BE WITH YOU, REBECCA...! YOUR TRIALS ARE... OVER...!
NOBODY EVER SAID... THE LAST OF THE RAVENWIND WITCHES... HAD TO BE... A GIRL...!
GIDEON WAS A FANATIC... SHORT-SIGHTED... NARROW-MINDED... AND HE HAS PAID... THE PRICE...!

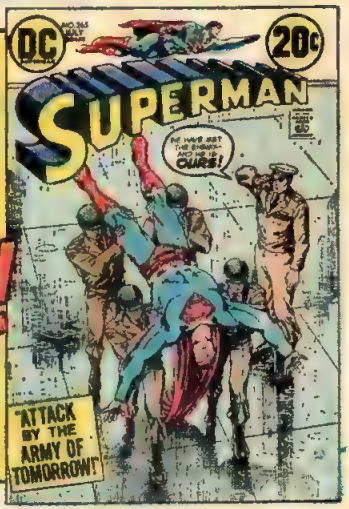

ADDENDUM: COUNTLESS MILES AWAY ON A MOONLIT NEW ENGLAND PORCH...
THE AIR IS SO CRISP, YOU CAN ALMOST HEAR IT CRACKLE!
I DIDN'T THINK THEY MADE NIGHTS LIKE THIS ANY MORE!
THEY DON'T! WHAT YOU'RE EXPERIENCING IS A MANIFESTATION OF YOUR MOST SECRET DESIRES!


HONEY, MY MOST SECRET DESIRES HAVE ABSOLUTELY NOTHING TO DO WITH THE WEATHER!
IF YOU MEAN WHAT I THINK YOU MEAN, SIR--
--YOU SHOULD BE ASHAMED!


BUT I AM, LINDA DARLING-- I MOST CERTAINLY AM!
OH, YOU SILLY--!
I JUST DON'T KNOW WHAT I'M GOING TO DO WITH YOU... DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND!
NEXT ISSUE: A CLOCKWORK HORROR!

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE ON OR ABOUT JUNE 7TH

THE MAN OF TOMORROW CLASHES WITH THE ARMY OF TOMORROW!
IN THE GREATEST SUPER-EPIC OF TODAY!
ON SALE APRIL 5th



SWAMP
DC
THING
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NO. 6
OCT.
30686
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SWAMP THING
WRIGHTSON

SHOCKINGLY--THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING!
WITNESS: THE DESKTOP OF A MAN BEWILDERED, SPREAD HAPHAZARDLY WITH THE USUAL CLIPPINGS AND FILES THAT ARE THE FABRIC OF AN INVESTIGATOR'S WORK--BUT THESE PARTICULAR PAPERS ARE MORE THAN WORK--MUCH MORE!
THEY ARE, IN FACT, THE PIECES OF A MOST PERPLEXING PUZZLE--A MYSTERY THAT HAS HAUNTED MATT CABLE ACROSS THE FACE OF THE EARTH!
GO AHEAD THEN--STUDY THESE SCANT BITS OF INFORMATION--BUT STUDY THEM WITH CARE--FOR THEY MAY WELL BE THE FRAGMENTS OF ONE MAN'S SOUL!
A CLOCKWORK HORROR!
Artist's Conception
REFER TO SPECIFICS ON ATTACHED DATA SHEET
Matt—This is the best I could do with the description you gave me!
Bernie
P.S. Call me if you need revisions
SAILOR'S REPORT: STATEMENT OF PATRICK LAFABEE AS TOLD TO LEN WEIN
#095731 FERRET, MAXWELL ALIAS LEN BERNARD
SWAMP THING
HOLLAND
SABOTAGE!
J-3034

SWAMP THING, Vol. 2, No. 6, Sept.-Oct., 1973. Published bi-monthly by NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., 909 Third Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10022. Carmine Infantino, Publisher. Joe Orlando, Editor. E. Nelson Bridwell, Assistant Editor. Sol Harrison, Production Manager. Advertising Representative, Sanford Schwartz & Co., Inc., 16 West 46th Street, New York, N.Y. 10036. Copyright © 1973 by National Periodical Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A

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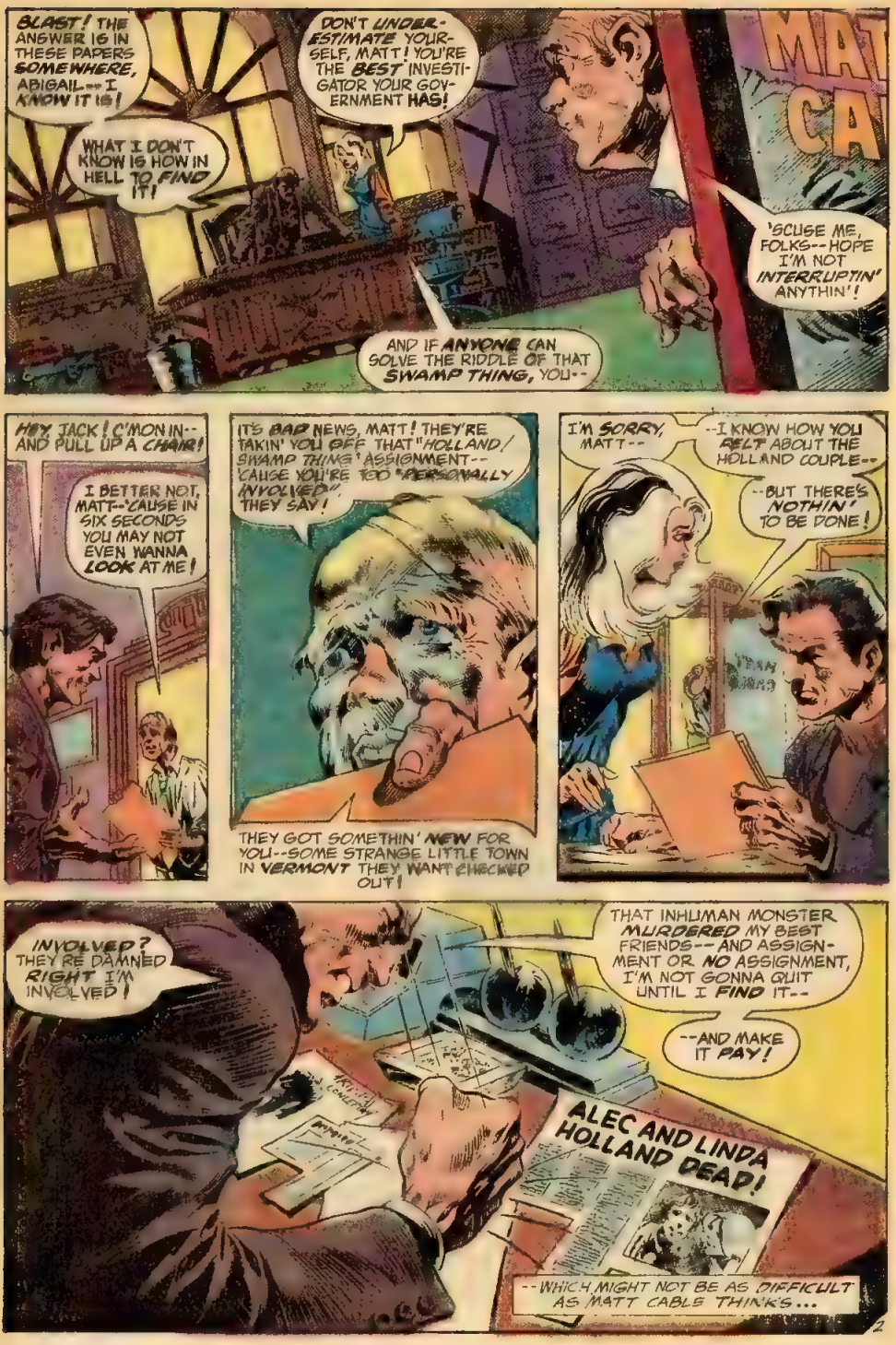
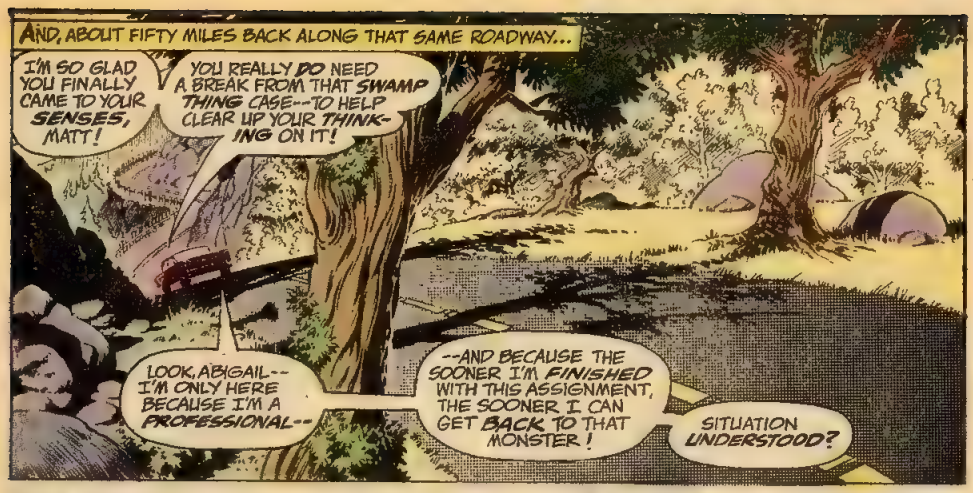
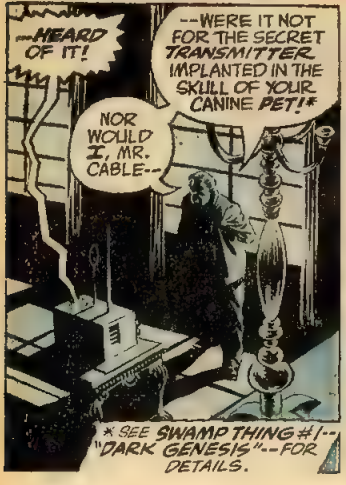

BLAST! THE ANSWER IS IN THESE PAPERS SOMEWHERE, ABIGAIL--I KNOW IT IS!
WHAT I DON'T KNOW IS HOW IN HELL TO FIND IT!
DON'T UNDERESTIMATE YOURSELF, MATT! YOU'RE THE BEST INVESTIGATOR YOUR GOVERNMENT HAS!
AND IF ANYONE CAN SOLVE THE RIDDLE OF THAT SWAMP THING, YOU--
'SCUSE ME, FOLKS--HOPE I'M NOT INTERRUPTIN' ANYTHIN'!
HEY JACK! C'MON IN--AND PULL UP A CHAIR!
I BETTER NOT, MATT--'CAUSE IN SIX SECONDS YOU MAY NOT EVEN WANNA LOOK AT ME!
IT'S BAD NEWS, MATT! THEY'RE TAKIN' YOU OFF THAT "HOLLAND/SWAMP THING" ASSIGNMENT--'CAUSE YOU'RE TOO "PERSONALLY INVOLVED", THEY SAY!
THEY GOT SOMETHIN' NEW FOR YOU--SOME STRANGE LITTLE TOWN IN VERMONT THEY WANT CHECKED OUT!
I'M SORRY, MATT--
--I KNOW HOW YOU FELT ABOUT THE HOLLAND COUPLE--
--BUT THERE'S NOTHIN' TO BE DONE!
INVOLVED? THEY'RE DAMNED RIGHT I'M INVOLVED!
THAT INHUMAN MONSTER MURDERED MY BEST FRIENDS--AND ASSIGNMENT OR NO ASSIGNMENT, I'M NOT GONNA QUIT UNTIL I FIND IT--
--AND MAKE IT PAY!
ALEC AND LINDA HOLLAND DEAD!
--WHICH MIGHT NOT BE AS DIFFICULT AS MATT CABLE THINKS...

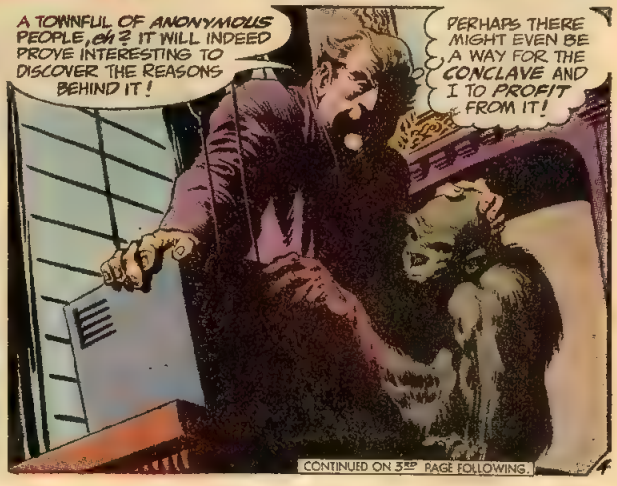
OBSERVE; A TWISTING TWO-LANE ROADWAY IN THE MOUNTAINS OF VERMONT--
--A VEGETABLE TRUCK OWNED BY ONE GUIDO ROSELLI, ITINERANT FARMER ...
--AN UNREPAIRED POTHOLE OVER WHICH SAID VEGETABLE TRUCK JOLINCES--
--AND A MOSS-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY OF A MAN--
--WHO HAD CHANCED TO STEAL A RIDE IN THE REAR OF THE AFOREMENTIONED VEHICLE--
--AND, IN SO DOING, LEARNS THAT--
--THERE AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS A FREE RIDE!
UHHNN... WHAT... HAPPENED...?
FEELS LIKE... I WAS PUT THROUGH... A CEMENT MIXER...!
FALL KNOCKED EVERYTHING... OUT OF ME...! HAVEN'T THE STRENGTH TO...
...HUH...?
A...BOOT... A GIRL'S BOOT...!
HI--NEED ANY HELP?
NO... IT CAN'T BE...!

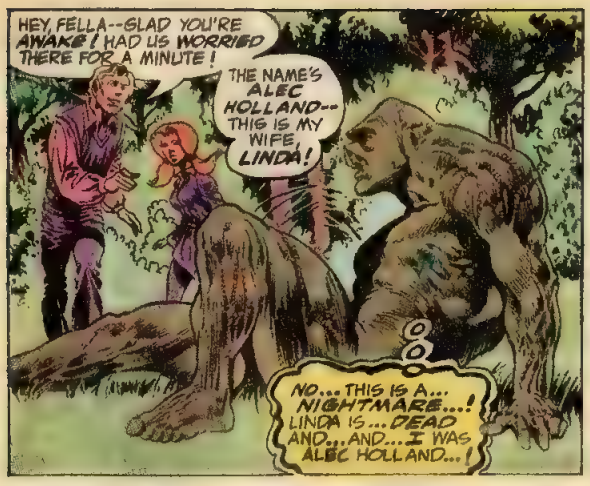

AND, ABOUT FIFTY MILES BACK ALONG THAT SAME ROADWAY...
I'M SO GLAD YOU FINALLY CAME TO YOUR SENSES, MATT!
YOU REALLY DO NEED A BREAK FROM THAT SWAMP THING CASE--TO HELP CLEAR UP YOUR THINK-ING ON IT!
LOOK, ABIGAIL--I'M ONLY HERE BECAUSE I'M A PROFESSIONAL--
--AND BECAUSE THE SOONER I'M FINISHED WITH THIS ASSIGNMENT, THE SOONER I CAN GET BACK TO THAT MONSTER!
SITUATION UNDERSTOOD?

PLEASE, MATT--GIVE YOURSELF A CHANCE! THIS SOUNDS LIKE SUCH AN INTERESTING CASE--!
DOES IT, ABIGAIL? WHAT'S SO INTERESTING ABOUT A DESERTED MINING TOWN SPRINGING BACK TO LIFE?

IF IT WASN'T FOR THE FACT THAT NONE OF THE TOWN'S NEW RESIDENTS HAS EVER REGISTERED WITH THE GOVERNMENT OR PAID ANY TAXES--
--WE'D NEVER HAVE EVEN HEARD OF IT!


--HEARD OF IT!
--WERE IT NOT FOR THE SECRET TRANSMITTER IMPLANTED IN THE SKULL OF YOUR CANINE PET!*
NOR WOULD I, MR. CABLE--
* SEE SWAMP THING #1--"DARK GENESIS"--FOR DETAILS.


A TOWNFUL OF ANONYMOUS PEOPLE, eh? IT WILL INDEED PROVE INTERESTING TO DISCOVER THE REASONS BEHIND IT!
PERHAPS THERE MIGHT EVEN BE A WAY FOR THE CONCLAVE AND I TO PROFIT FROM IT!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.


HEY, FELLA--GLAD YOU'RE AWAKE! HAD US WORRIED THERE FOR A MINUTE!
THE NAME'S ALEC HOLLAND--THIS IS MY WIFE LINDA!
NO... THIS IS A... NIGHTMARE...! LINDA IS... DEAD AND... AND... I WAS ALEC HOLLAND...!

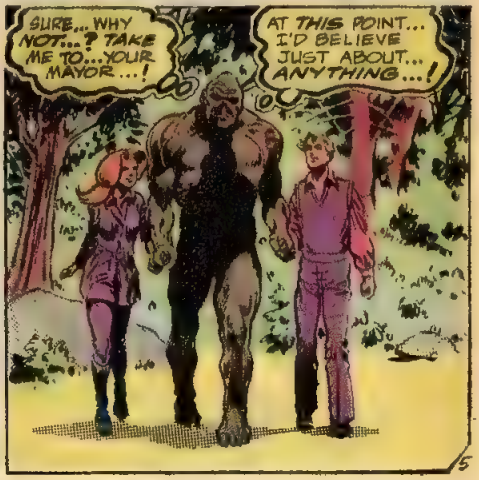
C'MON, FELLA--CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?
WE TOLD YOU OUR NAMES--WHAT'S YOURS?
I MUST BE... DELIRIOUS... IMAGINING THINGS...!

OH, YOU POOR THING! YOU CAN'T SPEAK. CAN YOU? YOU WERE HURT IN THE FALL!
FALL...? YES... THAT'S IT...! I'M STILL... UNCONSCIOUS... DREAMING ALL THIS...!

HERE--LET ME HELP YOU UP!
NOW LITTLE LINDA... IS LIFTING ME... OFF THE GROUND.. AND I WEIGH... OVER 500 POUNDS..!
I'VE GOT TO... SNAP OUT OF THIS...!

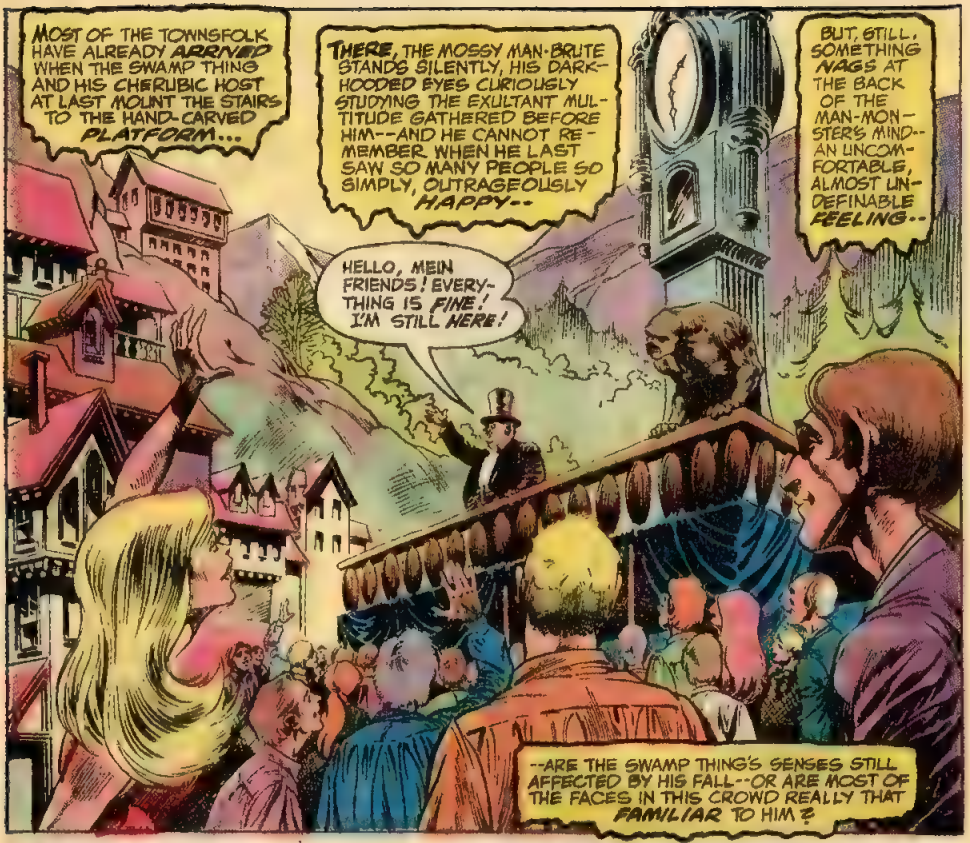
GO AWAY... BOTH OF YOU...! YOU'RE ONLY... FIGMENTS OF... A FEVERED MIND...!
AWWW, YOU POOR DEAR--YOU'RE CONFUSED, AREN'T YOU?

COME ON--WE'LL TAKE YOU INTO TOWN TO MEET THE MAYOR! HE'LL EXPLAIN EVERY-THING TO YOU!
HE'S GOOD AT THAT!


SURE... WHY NOT...? TAKE ME TO... YOUR MAYOR...!
AT THIS POINT... I'D BELIEVE JUST ABOUT... ANYTHING...!
5

IF THE SWAMP THING FELT HE WAS DREAMING BEFORE, HOW CAN HE POSSIBLY EXPLAIN THE SIGHT THAT LOOMS BEFORE HIM AT THE VERDANT FOREST'S EDGE?...
FOR WERE HE TO BELIEVE THE EVIDENCE OF HIS MOSS-ENCUMBERED EYES, HE WOULD HAVE TO SAY HE STANDS BEFORE A SMALL SWISS VILLAGE--WHICH IS IMPOSSIBLE...
...ISN'T IT?
KLOCHMANN
HERE WE ARE, FELLA! YOU'LL LOVE MAYOR KLOCHMANN!
EVERYBODY DOES!
ON CARVED BRASS HINGES, THE FRONT DOOR SWINGS OPEN--AND THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE IS THRUST INTO A STRANGE CACOPHONY OF ALL-TOO-FAMILIAR NOISES--
--THE PRECISION SOUNDS OF--TICKING!
WELCOME, MEIN FRIEND--COME IN--COME IN!
AND THAT IS WHEN THE SWAMP THING BECOMES AWARE HE IS DREAMING NO LONGER--IF EVER HE TRULY WAS!

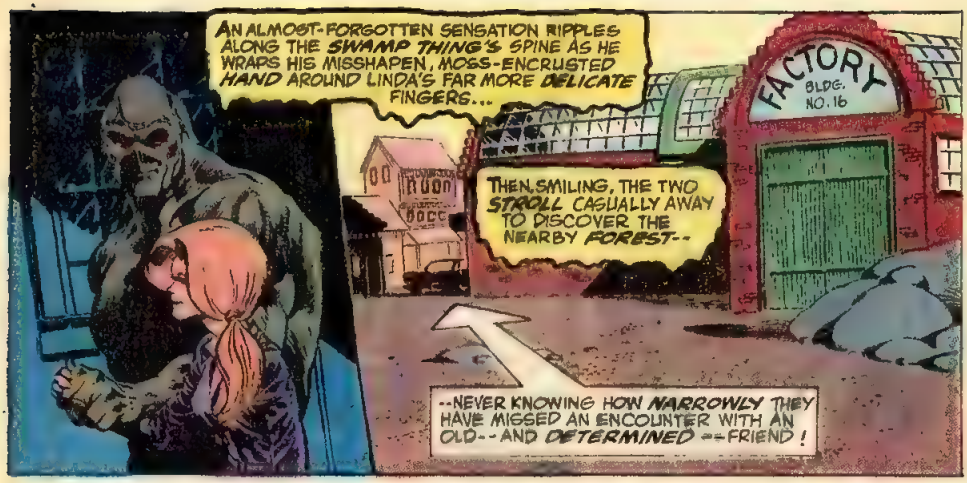
I TRUST HERR ALEC AND FRAU LINDA HAF SHOWN YOU THROUGH OUR LITTLE VILLAGE? VE ARE ALL QUITE PROUD OF IT, YOU KNOW--'THOUGH I, PERHAPS, AM PROUDER ZAN THE REST!
I DESIGNED THE TOWN, YOU SEE--BUILT MOST OF IT WIZ MEIN OWN TWO HANDS--!
BUT, AS USUAL, I FORGET MEIN MANNERS--! I TALK AND TALK--AND DO NOT EVEN INTRODUCE MYSELF--!
I AM HANS KLOCHMANN--CARPENTER, WATCH-MAKER, AND LATELY, MAYOR OF BURGESS TOWN--AT YOUR MOST WILLING SERVICE!
YOU VOULD CARE, PERHAPS, FOR SOME COOKIES--A GLASS OF MILK--?
NO--I SUPPOSE NOT--!
I CAN SEE FROM YOUR EYES, YOU DESIRE NO REFRESHMENTS--ONLY ANSWERS!
THEN ANSWERS YOU SHALL HAVE, MEIN STRANGE, SILENT FRIEND!
MAKE YOURSELF COMFORTABLE--IF ZAT IS POSSIBLE--AND I VILL TELL YOU EVERYTHING YOU VANT TO--
BBBBRRRWGG!
ACH--LOOK AT ZER TIME! FORGIVE ME, MEIN FRIEND--
--BUT I AM AFRAID MEIN TALE MUST VAIT!
AS MAYOR, ZERE ARE CERTAIN DUTIES I MUST PERFORM!
THE VILLAGERS VILL EXPECT ME IN THE TOWN SQUARE MOMENTARILY--AND I MUST NOT DISAPPOINT ZEM!
ZEY ARE ALL LIKE SUCH CHILDREN--AND ZEY SHOULD NOT BE KEPT VAITING!
BUT PLEASE, MEIN FRIEND--JOIN ME!


MOST OF THE TOWNSFOLK HAVE ALREADY ARRIVED WHEN THE SWAMP THING AND HIS CHERUBIC HOST AT LAST MOUNT THE STAIRS TO THE HAND-CARVED PLATFORM...
THERE, THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE STANDS SILENTLY, HIS DARK-HOODED EYES CURIOUSLY STUDYING THE EXULTANT MULTITUDE GATHERED BEFORE HIM--AND HE CANNOT REMEMBER WHEN HE LAST SAW SO MANY PEOPLE SO SIMPLY, OUTRAGEOUSLY HAPPY--
BUT, STILL, SOMETHING NAGS AT THE BACK OF THE MAN-MONSTER'S MIND--AN UNCOMFORTABLE, ALMOST UNDEFINABLE FEELING--
HELLO, MEIN FRIENDS! EVERYTHING IS FINE! I'M STILL HERE!
--ARE THE SWAMP THING'S SENSES STILL AFFECTED BY HIS FALL--OR ARE MOST OF THE FACES IN THIS CROWD REALLY THAT FAMILIAR TO HIM?

WONDERFUL PEOPLE, ARE THEY NOT, MEIN FRIEND?
SMILING--CAREFREE--TOTALLY UNABLE TO FEEL JEALOUSY--GREED--HATRED--OR ANY OF THE BILLION OTHER SINS THE SOUL OF MAN IS HEIR TO!
HAH! YOU STARE AT ME IN DISBELIEF--BUT I ASSURE YOU, MEIN FRIEND, I KNOW WHAT I SAY!

AFTER ALL, WHO COULD KNOW THE CITIZENS OF BURGESS BETTER--
--THAN THE FAT OLD MAN WHO BUILT THEM?
COME--IT IS TIME TO CONTINUE MY INTERRUPTED TALE!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

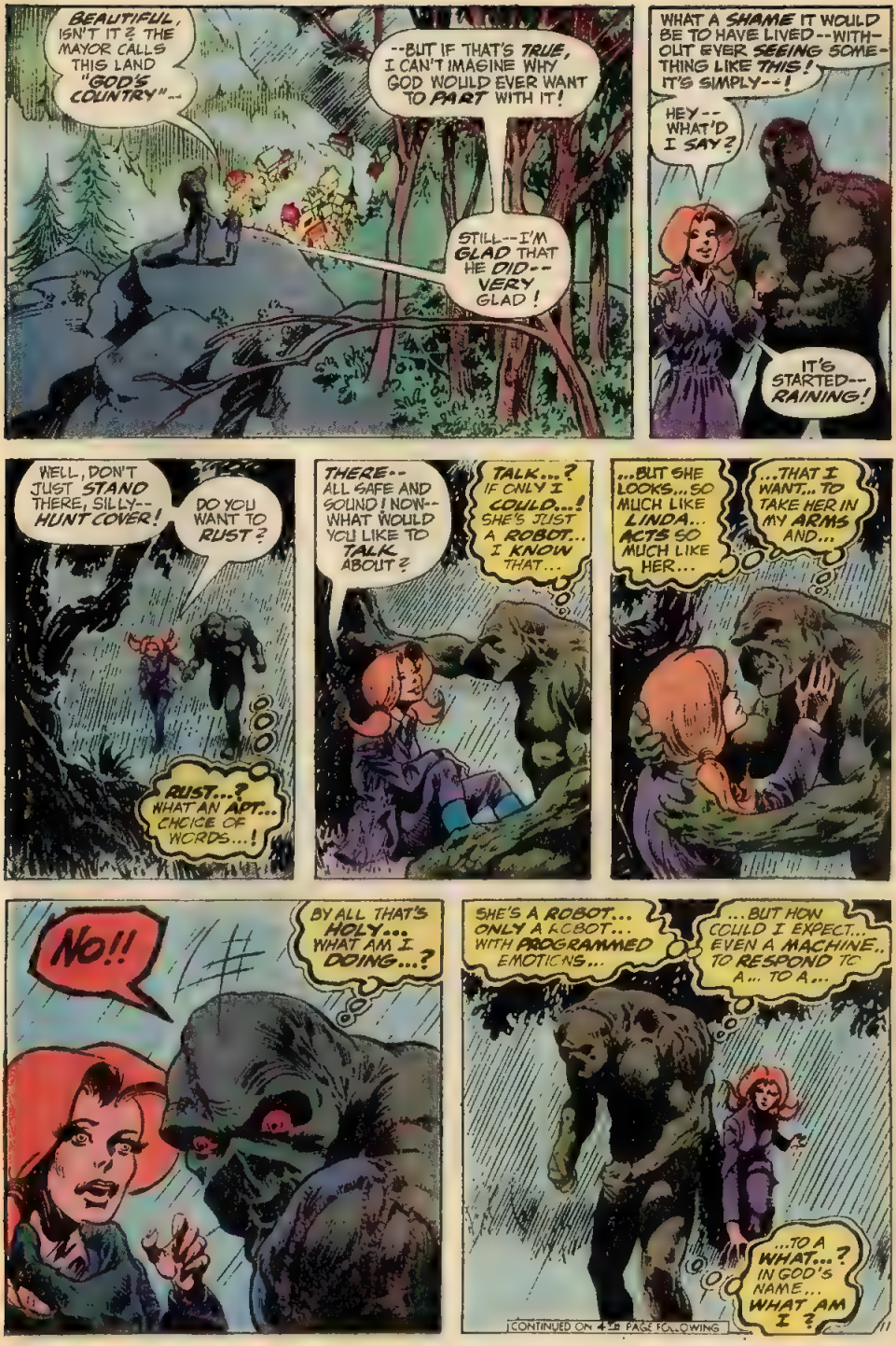
IN SWITZERLAND, I VAS AN ARTISAN--A MAKER OF CLOCK-WORK TOYS--BUT WHEN THE SECOND GREAT WAR BEGAN, I FLED MY HOME-LAND IN FEAR--
--AND CAME TO AMERICA--WHERE I STUMBLED UPON ZIS DESERTED MINING TOWN--
--AND KNEW I'D FOUND VHAT I VAS SEARCHING FOR!
I RECONSTRUCTED THE RUINS IN THE STYLE OF MEIN HOMELAND--THEN BUILT CLOCKWORK PEOPLE TO BRING THE TOWN TO LIFE!
VICTIMS OF SABOTAGE!
DRS. HOLLAND
VHY I GAVE MEIN CREATIONS FACES FROM THE NEWSPAPER OBITUARY COLUMNS I DO NOT KNOW--
--EXCEPT, PERHAPS, TO OFFER ZOSE POOR UNFORTUNATES A SECOND CHANCE--
--PERHAPS TO OFFER THE WORLD A SECOND CHANCE AS VELL--FOR VEN I DE-SIGNED MY ROBOTIC MARVELS--CONCEIVED THEIR INTRICATE MECHANICAL MINDS--
--I ELIMINATED ALL OF MANKIND'S BASER TRAITS! MY PEOPLE KNOW ONLY LOVE--FRIEND-SHIP--TRUST--COMPASSION--!
THEY ARE INCAPABLE OF RAISING THEIR HANDS AGAINST THEIR NEIGHBOR!
WHO KNOWS--? MAYBE, VITH LUCK, THE REST OF THE WORLD VILL LEARN FROM ZEM!
BUT ENOUGH OF SUCH MAUDLIN MATTERS!
LINDA, I'M CERTAIN OUR GUEST VOULD ENJOY A TOUR OF THE SURROUND-ING COUNTRY-SIDE!
YOUR--er--HUSBAND AND I HAVE THINGS TO ATTEND TO HERE!
OKAY, MAYOR KLOCHMANN--I'LL GIVE "TALL, DARK AND SILENT" HERE A LESSON IN FORESTRY HE'LL NEVER FORGET!


AN ALMOST-FORGOTTEN SENSATION RIPPLES ALONG THE SWAMP THING'S SPINE AS HE WRAPS HIS MISSHAPEN, MOSS-ENCRUSTED HAND AROUND LINDA'S FAR MORE DELICATE FINGERS...
FACTORY BLDG. NO. 16
THEN, SMILING, THE TWO STROLL CASUALLY AWAY TO DISCOVER THE NEARBY FOREST--
--NEVER KNOWING HOW NARROWLY THEY HAVE MISSED AN ENCOUNTER WITH AN OLD--AND DETERMINED --FRIEND!

SOUNDS LIKE PEOPLE WORKING INSIDE, ABIGAIL!
C'MON--MAYBE SOMEBODY HERE CAN TELL US WHERE TO FIND THE HEAD MAN IN THIS LOONEY TUNES TOWN!

WELCOME, MEIN FRIENDS--COME IN--COME IN! I AM MAYOR KLOCKMANN!
IN THAT CASE, PAL--I'VE GOT SOME QUESTIONS FOR YOU!

AND WHEN MATT CABLE'S MANY QUESTIONS HAVE BEEN ANSWERED--AND THE TALE RETOLD FOR THE SECOND TIME THIS DAY...
A TOWN PEOPLED WITH MECHANICAL MEN WHO MOVE AND SPEAK EXACTLY LIKE HUMANS--AND AN OLD MAN CAPABLE OF CREATING MORE--?!?
THIS IS A FIND INDEED--AND SOMETHING TO BE DEALT WITH PROMPTLY!
TASK FORCE FOUR--IMMEDIATE SCRAMBLE!
I HAVE A MOST IMPORTANT JOB FOR YOU!


BEAUTIFUL, ISN'T IT? THE MAYOR CALLS THIS LAND "GOD'S COUNTRY"--
--BUT IF THAT'S TRUE, I CAN'T IMAGINE WHY GOD WOULD EVER WANT TO PART WITH IT!
STILL--I'M GLAD THAT HE DID--VERY GLAD!
WHAT A SHAME IT WOULD BE TO HAVE LIVED--WITHOUT EVER SEEING SOMETHING LIKE THIS! IT'S SIMPLY--!
HEY--WHAT'D I SAY?
IT'S STARTED--RAINING!
WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE, SILLY--HUNT COVER!
DO YOU WANT TO RUST?
RUST...? WHAT AN ADT... CHOICE OF WORDS...!
THERE--ALL SAFE AND SOUND! NOW--WHAT WOULD YOU LIKE TO TALK ABOUT?
TALK...? IF ONLY I COULD...! SHE'S JUST A ROBOT... I KNOW THAT...
...BUT SHE LOOKS...SO MUCH LIKE LINDA... ACTS SO MUCH LIKE HER...
...THAT I WANT... TO TAKE HER IN MY ARMS AND...
NO!!
BY ALL THAT'S HOLY... WHAT AM I DOING...?
SHE'S A ROBOT... ONLY A ROBOT... WITH PROGRAMMED EMOTIONS...
...BUT HOW COULD I EXPECT... EVEN A MACHINE.. TO RESPOND TO A... TO A...
...TO A WHAT...? IN GOD'S NAME... WHAT AM I?
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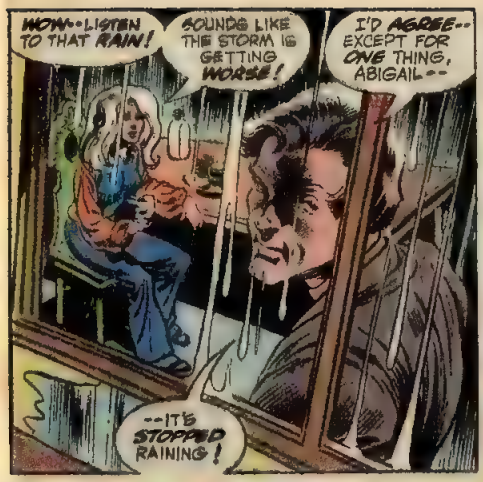
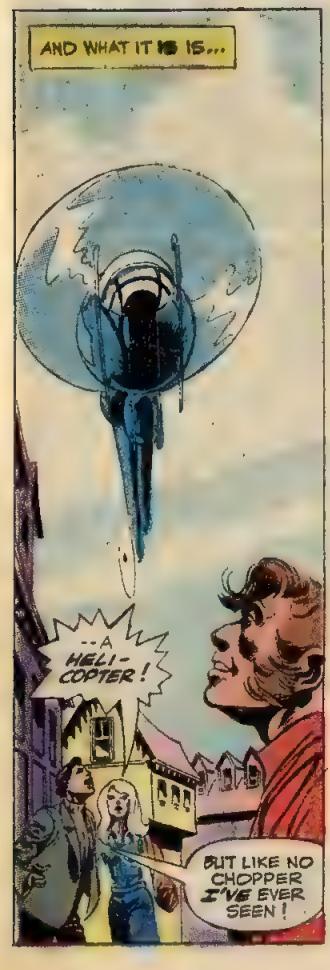
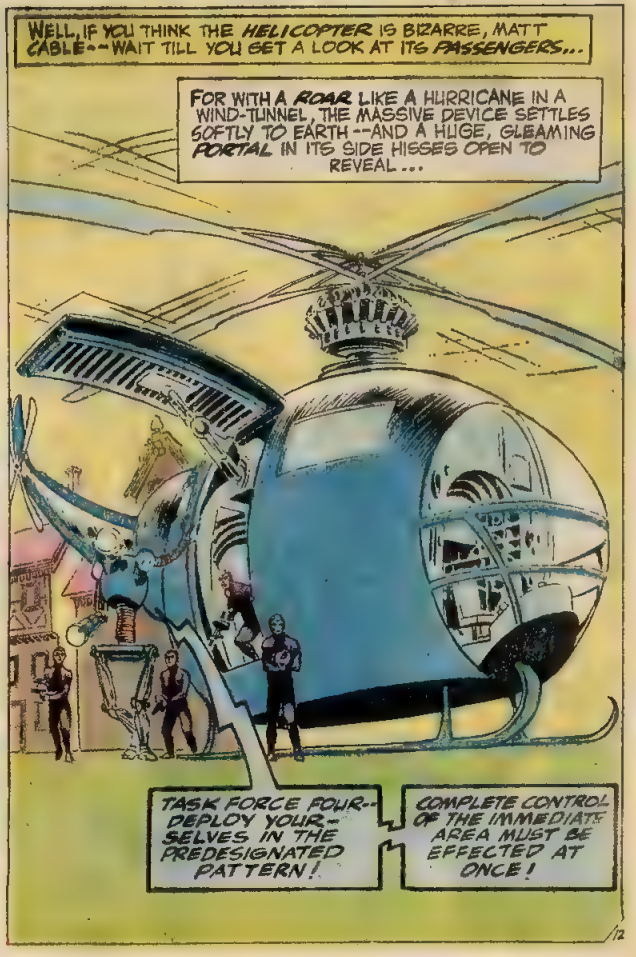

WOW--LISTEN TO THAT RAIN!
SOUNDS LIKE THE STORM IS GETTING WORSE!
I'D AGREE--EXCEPT FOR ONE THING, ABIGAIL--
--IT'S STOPPED RAINING!

NO--SOMETHING ELSE IS HOWLING UP THAT RACKET OUT THERE--
--AND I THINK I'D BETTER FIND OUT WHAT IT IS!


AND WHAT IT IS IS...
--A HELI-COPTER!
BUT LIKE NO CHOPPER I'VE EVER SEEN!


WELL, IF YOU THINK THE HELICOPTER IS BIZARRE, MATT CABLE--WAIT TILL YOU GET A LOOK AT ITS PASSENGERS...
FOR WITH A ROAR LIKE A HURRICANE IN A WIND-TUNNEL, THE MASSIVE DEVICE SETTLES SOFTLY TO EARTH--AND A HUGE, GLEAMING PORTAL IN ITS SIDE HISSES OPEN TO REVEAL...
TASK FORCE FOUR--DEPLOY YOUR-SELVES IN THE PREDESIGNATED PATTERN!
COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE IMMEDIATE AREA MUST BE EFFECTED AT ONCE!

WELCOME, MEIN FRIENDS! I AM HANS KLOCHMANN-- THE MAYOR!
IS THERE SOME WAY I CAN BE OF SERVICE TO YOU?
KLOCHMANN? YES--YOU CAN BE OF GREAT SERVICE TO US-- AND YOU ALONE! I REPRESENT AN ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS THE CONCLAVE--
...AND WE DESIRE EXCLUSIVE CONTROL-- OF YOU AND YOUR MECHANICAL CREATIONS!
YOU WHAT? BUT THAT IS IMPOSSIBLE-- QUITE IMPOSSIBLE!
NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE, MISTER KLOCHMANN-- AS YOU WILL SOON LEARN!
AS YOU CAN SEE, THE CONCLAVE HAS HAD SOME SMALL SUCCESS IN THE FIELD OF ROBOTICS-- NOTHING CLOSE TO YOUR OWN, OF COURSE--
--AND WE INTEND TO MAKE USE OF YOUR KNOWLEDGE ONE WAY OR--
OVER MY DEAD BODY, YOU WILL!
THAT CAN BE MOST EASILY ARRANGED, YOU IM-PULSIVE IDIOT--
--IF YOU DARE ATTEMPT ANYTHING SO FOOLISH AGAIN!
BRRRRITT!
MATT-- YOUR ARM--!
PLEASE, MISS ARCANE-- YOU NEED NOT CONCERN YOURSELF SO OVER A MINOR FLESH WOUND!
MATTHEW CABLE HAS SUFFERED MUCH WORSE IN HIS TIME, I ASSURE YOU!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.
5

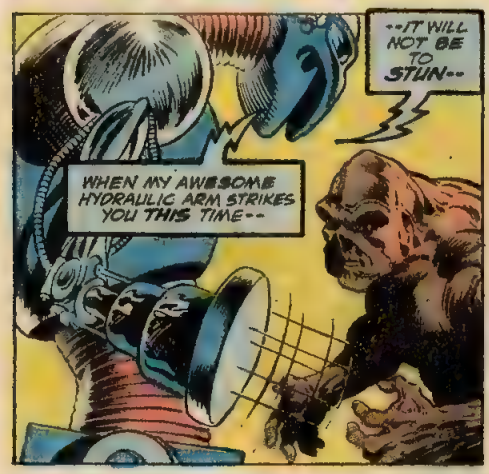
COME NOW, MR. CABLE-- YOU NEEDN'T LOOK SO ASTONISHED! I'VE KEPT A CLOSE WATCH ON YOU FOR SEVERAL MONTHS NOW!
INDEED--I KNOW ALL ABOUT YOU-- AND YOUR HUNT FOR THE CREATURE CALLED THE SWAMP THING!
YES, MATTHEW-- YOU'VE BEEN MOST IN-VALUABLE TO US OF LATE--
--BUT I'M AFRAID THAT VALUE HAS COME TO AN END!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT, TIN-MAN--BUT THAT LAST COMMENT DOESN'T EXACTLY BREAK MY HEART!
WE HAVE NO INTEREST IN BREAKING YOUR HEART, MR. CABLE--
--ONLY YOUR WILL!
THERE IS MUCH WE WISH TO KNOW ABOUT THE OPERATION OF YOUR SECURITY ORGANIZATION--
--BUT I AM QUITE CERTAIN THAT ALL SUCH INFORMATION MUST BE GLEANED FROM YOU BY FORCE--
--AND THOSE ACTIVITIES CAN BEST BE CONDUCTED IN OUR HOME OFFICE!
GOODBYE, MR. CABLE-- I WILL REJOIN YOU WHEN I'VE CONCLUDED MY BUSINESS HERE!
BUT YOU HAF NO BUSINESS HERE, YOU VILE MONSTER!
EVEN IF YOU KILL ME, I VOULD NEVER WORK FOR SUCH AS YOU!

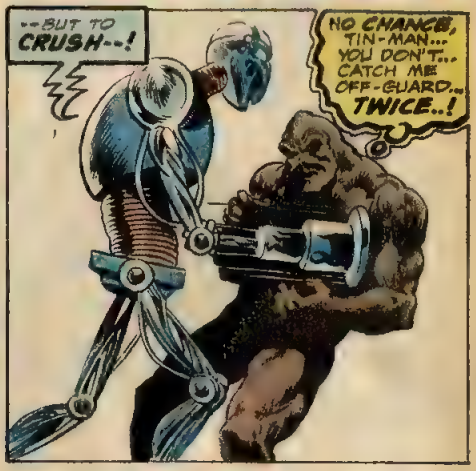
KILL YOU, MAYOR KLOCHMANN? WE WOULD NEVER DREAM OF SUCH A THING--
--BUT YOUR MECHANICAL CONSTITUENTS ARE ANOTHER THING ENTIRELY!
SQUEE-RANG
NO!
AND, FROM THE EDGE OF THE NEARBY CLEARING, THE CRY IS ECHOED-- IN TONES VERY FAR FROM MECHANICAL...
ALEC--? OH, NO-- NO!!
ANGUISHED, THE GIRL RACES FORWARD-- STARTLING A JUMP-SUITED GUNMAN--
--WHOSE STILL-SMOKING WEAPON DESCRIBES A SHORT HORIZONTAL ARC--
--AND ONCE MORE, IN LESS TIME THAT IT TAKES TO TELL IT, THE FRAGMENTS OF AN AUTOMATED LIFE ARE SCATTERED ACROSS THE TOWN SQUARE...
PLEASE--NO! I LOVE HIM-- LOVE-- SQUEEE!
LINDA...? GOD, NO... NOT AGAIN...!
THERE'S NOTHING... I CAN DO FOR HER... NOW...!
--LOVE HIM-- LOVE HIM--
OH, LINDA... HAVE I FOUND YOU...ONLY TO LOSE YOU... FOR A SECOND TIME...?
--LOVE HIM-- LOVE HIM--
NO, LINDA... IT'S ME YOU LOVE...THE ME I USED BE...!
--LOVE HIM-- LOVE HIM--
PLEASE, LINDA... STOP THAT...! IT'S ME YOU LOVE... ME...!
--LOVE HIM-- LOVE HIM--
STOP IT, LINDA... YOU DON'T LOVE HIM... YOU DON'T..!
--LOVE HIM-- LOVE HIM--
STOP IT, LINDA... STOP IT... STOP IT...STOP IT..!
KRUMP!
SQUEEE
15

HIS HYSTERICAL FURY SPENT, THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE STARES SHAMEFULLY FOR A MOMENT AT THE SHATTERED IMAGE OF THE WOMAN HE LOVED--
OUT OF MY WAY, SCUM...OR YOU'LL GET... JUST A TASTE...OF WHAT I PLAN... FOR YOUR MASTER...!
SO--OUR LITTLE COMPANY IS COMPLETE! AT LONG LAST, THE SWAMP THING ENTERS THE SCENE!
--THEN THE RAGE THAT WELLS WITHIN HIM CAN SCARCELY BE CONTAINED!
YES, MONSTER--WE KNOW OF YOU! IN FACT, WE'VE HUNTED YOU FOR QUITE A TIME NOW!
THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR BRINGING OUR SEARCH TO AN END!
THWUMP!
I'M CERTAIN OUR PEOPLE IN GOTHAM CAN GAIN EASILY AS MUCH FROM YOU AS THEY CAN FROM MATT CABLE!
CABLE...? THEY HAVE HIM, TOO...?
NOW JUST SIT THERE QUIETLY UNTIL WE ARE READY TO LEAVE--
--AND MY MIGHTY HYDRAULIC ARM WILL NOT BE PUT TO USE AGAIN!
SIT HERE QUIETLY... AFTER WHAT YOU HAVE DONE...?
THOOM!
ROBOT... YOU MUST BE... JOKING..!

MISSHAPEN FOOL-- THIS BODY IS FORGED FROM THE STRONGEST TITANIUM STEEL! HOW COULD YOU EVEN THINK TO DAMAGE IT?
THUD!

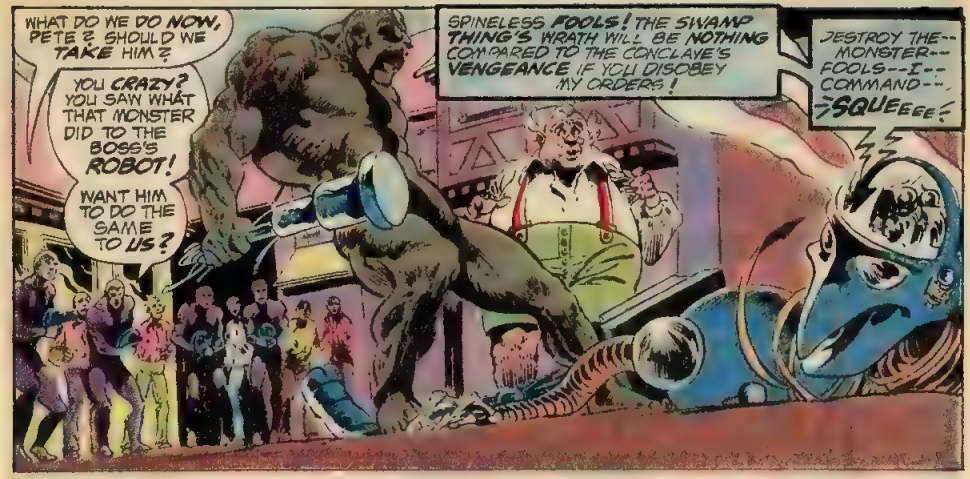
I DO NOT GIVE WARNING LIGHTLY, MONSTER!
YOU DISOBEYED ME ONCE--BUT YOU WILL NOT LIVE TO ATTEMPT IT AGAIN!


--IT WILL NOT BE TO STUN--
WHEN MY AWESOME HYDRAULIC ARM STRIKES YOU THIS TIME--


--BUT TO CRUSH--!
NO CHANCE, TIN-MAN... YOU DON'T... CATCH ME OFF-GUARD... TWICE..!

SO YOU CAN TAKE... THIS MUCH-VAUNTED... HYDRAULIC ARM OF YOURS...
RRACK!

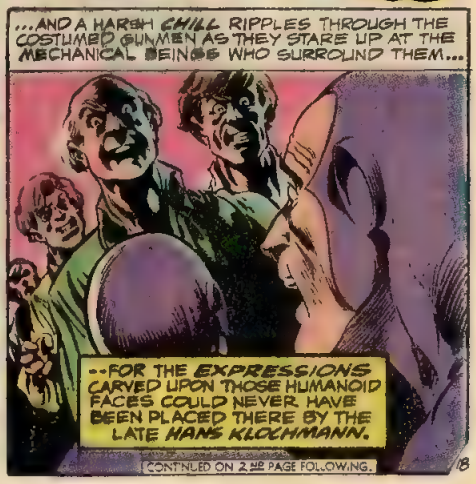
...AND STICK IT... IN YOUR MECHANICAL EAR...!
THRASH!
NO--STOP! WHAT ARE YOU DO--!


WHAT DO WE DO NOW, PETE? SHOULD WE TAKE HIM?
YOU CRAZY? YOU SAW WHAT THAT MONSTER DID TO THE BOSS'S ROBOT!
WANT HIM TO DO THE SAME TO US?
SPINELESS FOOLS! THE SWAMP THING'S WRATH WILL BE NOTHING COMPARED TO THE CONCLAVE'S VENGEANCE IF YOU DISOBEY MY ORDERS!
DESTROY THE-- MONSTER-- FOOLS--I-- COMMAND--.
-SQUEeee-

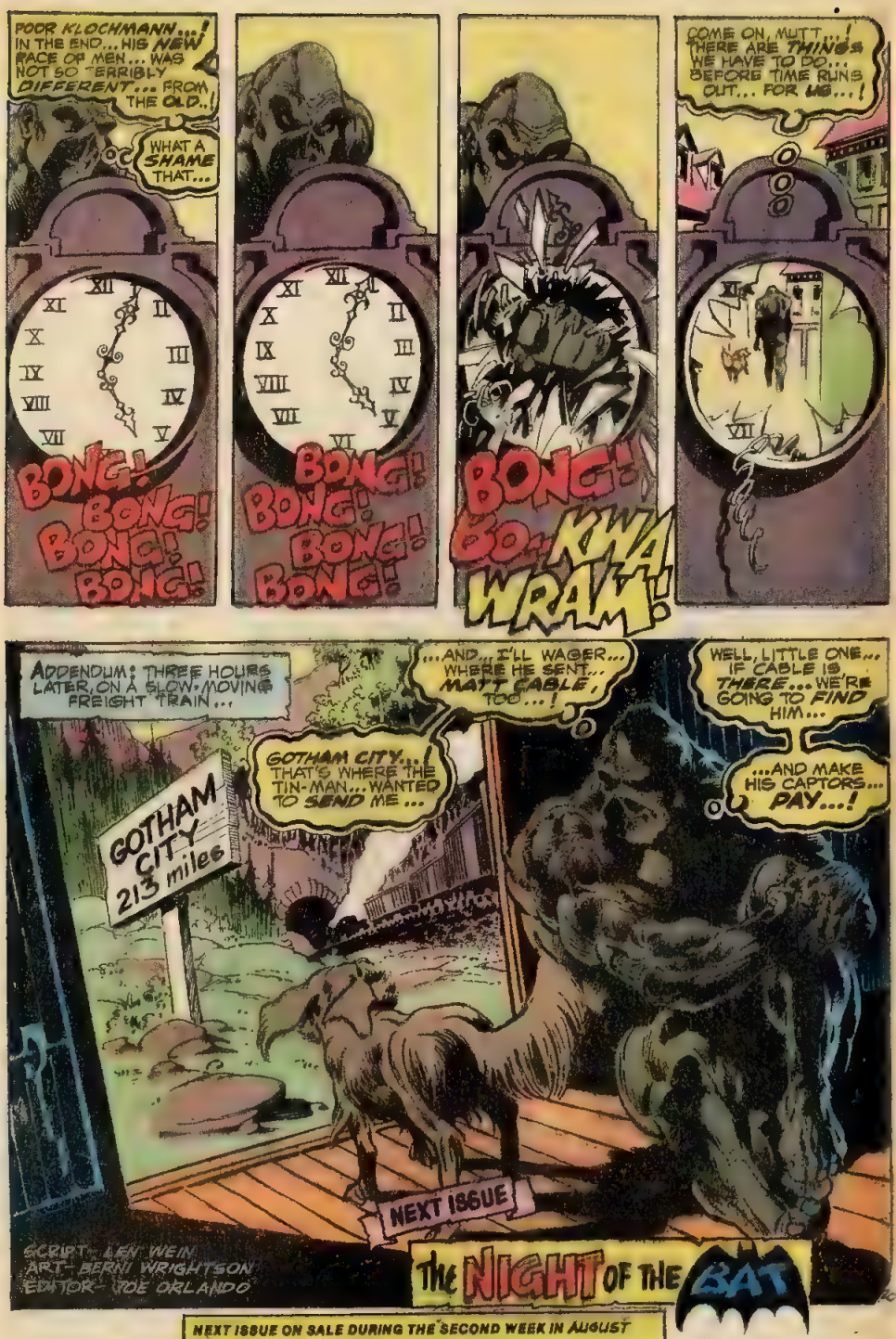
YOU HEARD THE MAN, FELLAS!
NO--I BEG OF YOU--DO NOT DO THIS THING--!
GUN HIM-- NOW!

THERE HAS BEEN ENOUGH VIOLENCE HERE TODAY! DO NOT MAKE A MOCKERY OF ALL THAT I HAF LIVED--
UUNNGH!
BRATAT
NO...! KLOCHMANN STEPPED INTO... THE LINE OF FIRE...BEFORE I COULD MOVE..!
THEY'VE... KILLED HIM...!

FOR A SEEMING ETERNITY, SILENCE HANGS HEAVILY UPON THE SCENE--
--AS THE STUNNED ASSEMBLAGE GAZES MUTELY AT THE SPRAWLED FORM OF A MAN WHO WAS WILLING TO DIE FOR HIS DREAM...


...AND A HARSH CHILL RIPPLES THROUGH THE COSTUMED GUNMEN AS THEY STARE UP AT THE MECHANICAL BEINGS WHO SURROUND THEM...
--FOR THE EXPRESSIONS CARVED UPON THOSE HUMANOID FACES COULD NEVER HAVE BEEN PLACED THERE BY THE LATE HANS KLOCHMANN.
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.

"THEY ARE INCAPABLE OF RAISING THEIR HANDS AGAINST THEIR NEIGHBORS," THOSE WERE THE LITTLE CLOCKMAKER'S WORDS--
--BUT THEIR MEANING IS SOON DROWNED OUT BY THE FURIOUS CHATTER OF MACHINE GUN FIRE THAT ECHOES ACROSS THE SQUARE...
IF HANS KLOCHMANN HAD LIVED TO WITNESS THIS ATROCITY, HE WOULD SURELY HAVE BEEN HEART-BROKEN--
--PERHAPS HE WOULD HAVE CRIED--
--BUT THEN, IF THE JOVIAL MAYOR OF BURGESS HAD LIVED, THIS SPECTACLE WOULD NEVER HAVE COME TO PASS--
--FOR THE RING OF TORN AND TWISTED MECHANICAL BODIES THAT PRESSES INEXORABLY IN UPON THE FOUR TERRIFIED HENCHMEN IS A CIRCLE BORN OF THE BURNING NEED FOR VENGEANCE--
--AND THOUGH THAT VENGEANCE IS NOT SO MUCH SOUGHT OUT OF HATRED FOR THE GUNMEN AS IT IS OUT OF LOVE FOR THE OLD MAN THEY HAD SLAIN--
--ITS RESULT IS HORRIBLY, PITIABLY, THE SAME!
WHEN THE CLAMOR OF BULLETS RENDING METAL--AND OF METAL CRUSHING FLESH--AT LAST FADES INTO SILENCE--
--THERE IS ONLY THE SOLEMN SWAMP THING LEFT STANDING IN THE VILLAGE SQUARE!


POOR KLOCHMANN...! IN THE END... HIS NEW FACE OF MEN... WAS NOT SO TERRIBLY DIFFERENT... FROM THE OLD..!
WHAT A SHAME THAT...
BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG!
BONG! BONG! BONG! BONG!
BONG! BONG! KWA WRAM!
COME ON, MUTT...! THERE ARE THINGS WE HAVE TO DO... BEFORE TIME RUNS OUT... FOR US...!
ADDENDUM: THREE HOURS LATER, ON A SLOW-MOVING FREIGHT TRAIN...
GOTHAM CITY 213 miles
GOTHAM CITY...! THAT'S WHERE THE TIN-MAN... WANTED TO SEND ME...
...AND... I'LL WAGER... WHERE HE SENT... MATT CABLE, TOO...!
WELL, LITTLE ONE... IF CABLE IS THERE... WE'RE GOING TO FIND HIM...
...AND MAKE HIS CAPTORS... PAY...!
NEXT ISSUE
SCRIPT- LEN WEIN
ART- BERNI WRIGHTSON
EDITOR- JOE ORLANDO
THE NIGHT OF THE BAT
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE SECOND WEEK IN AUGUST

SWAMP
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SWAMP
THING
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
BRIGHTSON

Like one that on a lonesome road
Doth walk in fear and dread,
W. 3RD ST.
And, having once turned round, walks on,
And turns no more his head;
Because he knows a frightful fiend
Doth close behind him tread.
SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE SAID THAT IN THE "RIME OF THE ANCIENT MARINER".
"AND I SWEAR BY THE SPIRITS OF MY PARENTS TO AVENGE THEIR DEATHS BY SPENDING THE REST OF MY LIFE WARRING ON ALL CRIMINALS."
BRUCE WAYNE SAID THAT "BY A GOTHAM CITY GRAVE-SIDE.
THERE IS MOST DEFINITELY A CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO--AND WE SHALL ALL SOON DISCOVER EXACTLY WHAT IT IS!
BOOKS
INCOME TAX
GOTHAM
"NIGHT OF THE BAT"
A LEN WEIN (WRITER) / BERNI WRIGHTSON (ILLUSTRATOR) / JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION

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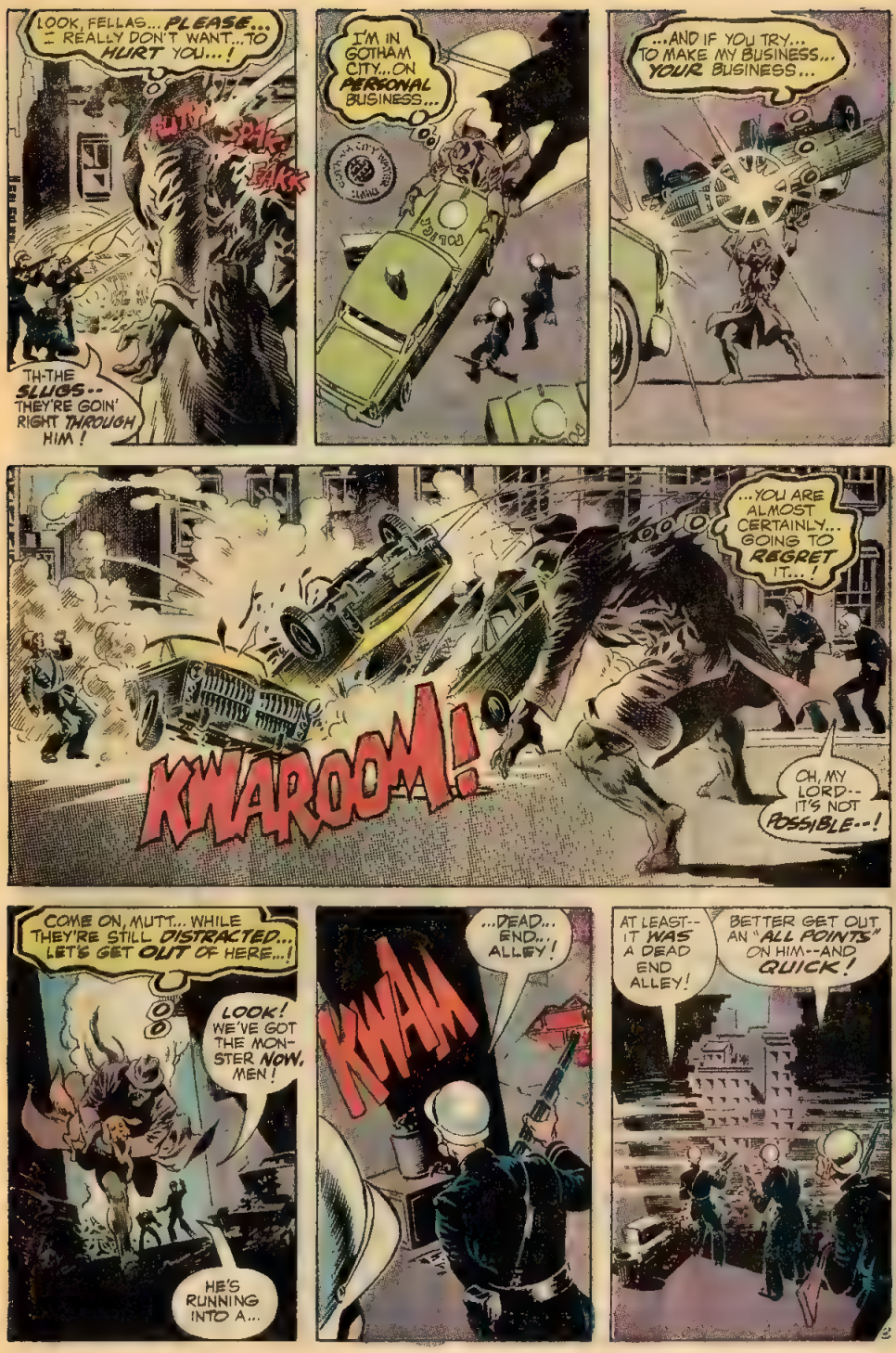
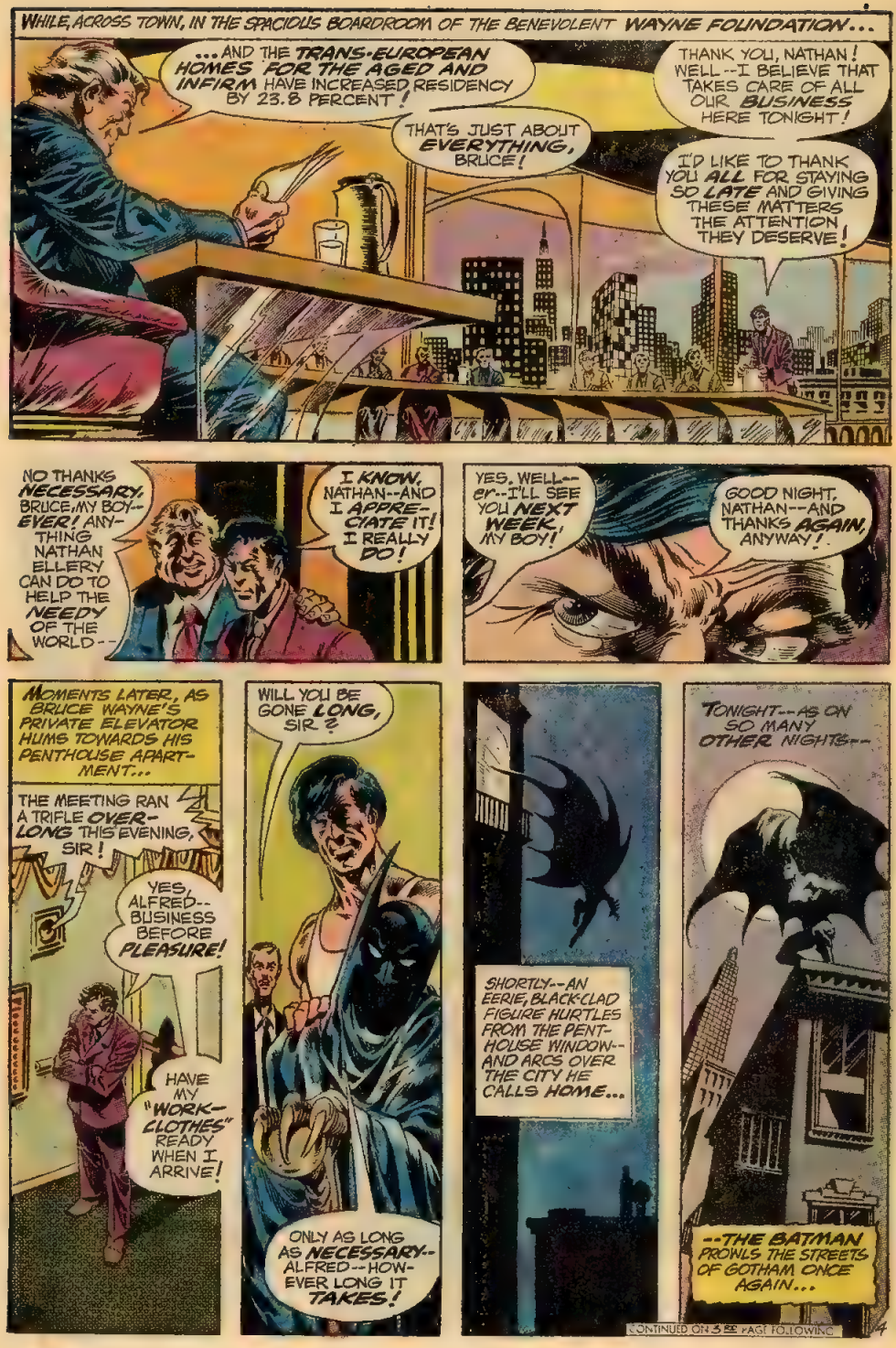
HOPE SEEING ME... DIDN'T GIVE THAT POOR GUY... A HEART ATTACK...
...BUT SEEING HIM... GAVE ME AN IDEA...
...CLOTHES..!
CAN'T REALLY... GET AROUND THE BIG BAD CITY... WITHOUT THEM...
YEAH, O'HARA-- I SAID A MONSTER-- WITH A DOG, YET! IT'S...
...AND IT APPEARS... I'VE LOCATED JUST THE PLACE... TO ACQUIRE SOME...!
C'MON, O'HARA-- I HAVEN'T TOUCHED A DROP OF THE STUFF! NOW GET ME A FEW SQUAD CARS OVER HERE-- PRONTO--
--AND FER HEAVEN'S SAKE, NO SIRENS! THE LAST THING I WANNA DO IS IRRITATE HIM!
SEVERAL MOMENTS LATER...
WE'RE DEALIN' WITH A MONSTER, ALL RIGHT, CHIEF!
ANYTHING THAT CAN TEAR APART STEEL GATES WITH HIS BARE HANDS...
OKAY, MEN--SPREAD OUT--AND STAY UNDER COVER!
"...HAS GOTTA BE THE GRAND-DADDY MONSTER OF 'EM ALL!"
THERE, MUTT...!
PRESENTING THE NEW ALEC HOLLAND... STAR OF STAGE... SCREEN... AND SUMP-HOLE...!
WELL... AT LEAST THIS WAY... NOBODY WILL BE QUICK TO NOTICE... SEVEN-PLUS FEET OF SHAMBLING SWAMP GUNK..!
COME ON, MUTT..! LET'S GET...?
THIS IS THE POLICE! YOU ARE UNDER ARREST!
COME FORWARD PEACEFULLY-- HANDS ABOVE YOUR HEAD--AND YOU WILL NOT BE HURT!
MISTER... YOU HAVE GOT TO BE KIDD...
UHNN!
BLAM!
SARGE, H-HE'S ATTACKING US!
2


LOOK, FELLAS... PLEASE... I REALLY DON'T WANT...TO HURT YOU...!
FUTH
SPAK
FAKK
TH-THE SLUGS-- THEY'RE GOIN' RIGHT THROUGH HIM!
I'M IN GOTHAM CITY...ON PERSONAL BUSINESS...
...AND IF YOU TRY... TO MAKE MY BUSINESS... YOUR BUSINESS...
...YOU ARE ALMOST CERTAINLY... GOING TO REGRET IT...!
KWAROOM!
OH, MY LORD-- IT'S NOT POSSIBLE--!
COME ON, MUTT... WHILE THEY'RE STILL DISTRACTED... LET'S GET OUT OF HERE...!
LOOK! WE'VE GOT THE MONSTER NOW, MEN!
HE'S RUNNING INTO A...
KWAM
...DEAD... END... ALLEY!
AT LEAST-- IT WAS A DEAD END ALLEY!
BETTER GET OUT AN "ALL POINTS" ON HIM--AND QUICK!


WHILE, ACROSS TOWN, IN THE SPACIOUS BOARDROOM OF THE BENEVOLENT WAYNE FOUNDATION...
...AND THE TRANS-EUROPEAN HOMES FOR THE AGED AND INFIRM HAVE INCREASED RESIDENCY BY 23.8 PERCENT!
THAT'S JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING, BRUCE!
THANK YOU, NATHAN! WELL--I BELIEVE THAT TAKES CARE OF ALL OUR BUSINESS HERE TONIGHT!
I'D LIKE TO THANK YOU ALL FOR STAYING SO LATE AND GIVING THESE MATTERS THE ATTENTION THEY DESERVE!
NO THANKS NECESSARY, BRUCE, MY BOY--EVER! ANYTHING NATHAN ELLERY CAN DO TO HELP THE NEEDY OF THE WORLD--
I KNOW, NATHAN--AND I APPRECIATE IT! I REALLY DO!
YES, WELL--er--I'LL SEE YOU NEXT WEEK, MY BOY!
GOOD NIGHT, NATHAN--AND THANKS AGAIN, ANYWAY!
MOMENTS LATER, AS BRUCE WAYNE'S PRIVATE ELEVATOR HUMS TOWARDS HIS PENTHOUSE APARTMENT...
THE MEETING RAN A TRIFLE OVER-LONG THIS EVENING, SIR!
YES, ALFRED--BUSINESS BEFORE PLEASURE!
HAVE MY "WORK-CLOTHES" READY WHEN I ARRIVE!
WILL YOU BE GONE LONG, SIR?
ONLY AS LONG AS NECESSARY--ALFRED--HOWEVER LONG IT TAKES!
SHORTLY--AN EERIE, BLACK-CLAD FIGURE HURTLES FROM THE PENTHOUSE WINDOW--AND ARCS OVER THE CITY HE CALLS HOME...
TONIGHT--AS ON SO MANY OTHER NIGHTS--
--THE BATMAN PROWLS THE STREETS OF GOTHAM ONCE AGAIN...
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING
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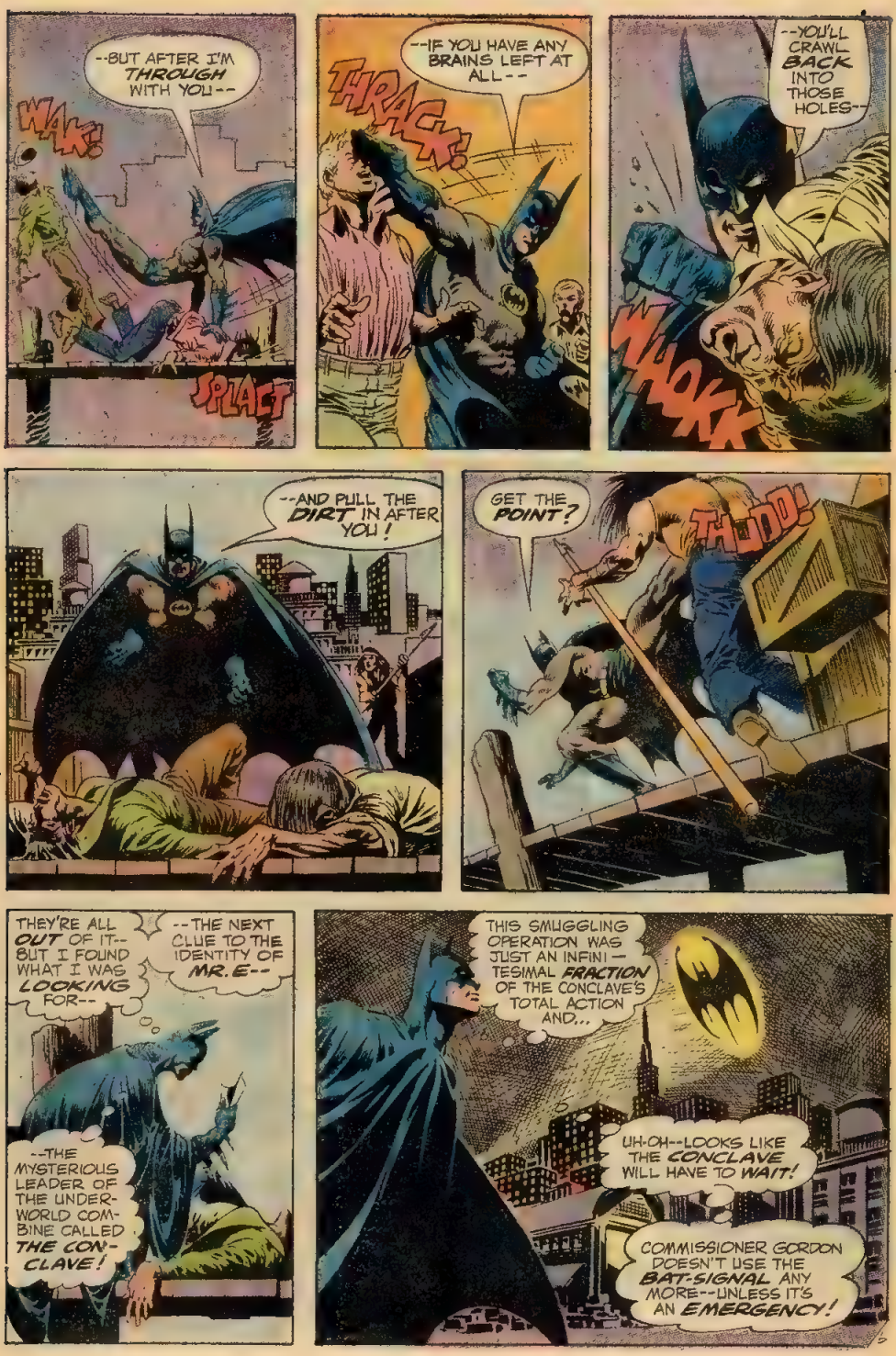
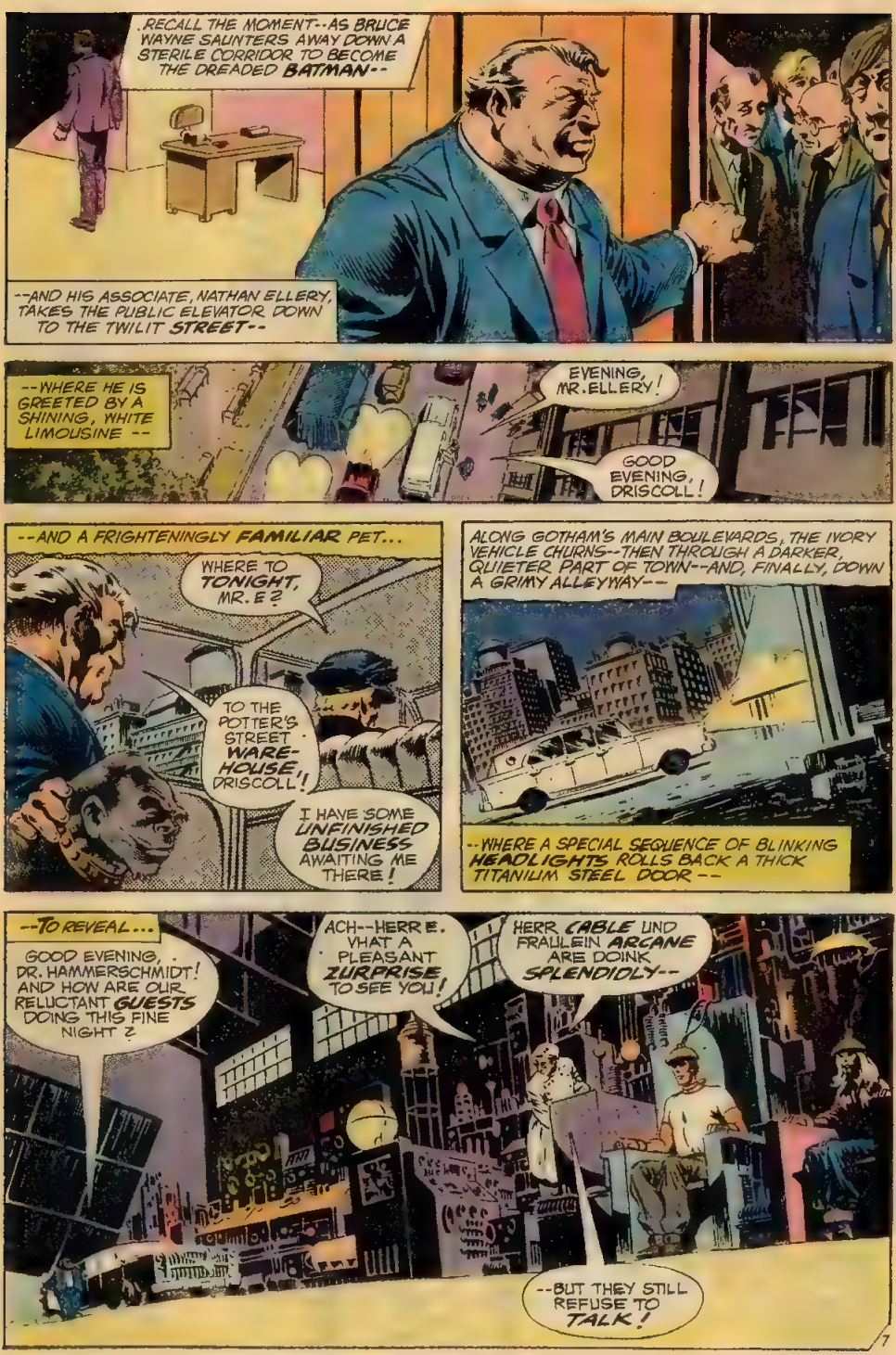
BUT THE CAPED CRUSADER IS NOT THE ONLY CREATURE MOVING THROUGH THE DARKNESS THIS NIGHT...
FOR AT THE DOCKYARDS ON GOTHAM'S LOWER WEST SIDE, A GANG OF WHARF RATS GOES ABOUT ITS BUSINESS...
-- SMUGGLING, TO BE EXACT!
C'MON, YA IDJITS-- MOVE IT! WE AIN'T GOT FEREVER, YA KNOW!
THE LOCAL COP CAR'LL BE COMIN' AROUND ON PATROL SOON, YA KNOW--
--AN' WE DON'T NEED ANY KIND'A GRIEF, YA KNOW!
THAT'S TOO BAD, FRIEND-- BECAUSE YOU'VE JUST BOUGHT ALL THE GRIEF YOU CAN HANDLE... "YA KNOW"?
WHO..?
OH... NO!
DON'T GO AWAY, LITTLE MAN!
I WANT TO HAVE WORDS WITH YOU!
I--I DON'T KNOW NUTHIN', BATMAN-- I SWEAR I DON'T--!
THEN SUPPOSE WE RATTLE YOUR LITTLE HEAD AROUND--
--AND SEE IF WE CAN'T SHAKE SOMETHING FREE?
CHUDD!
WE'LL SHAKE SOMETHIN' FREE, ALL RIGHT, BATMAN!
WE'RE GONNA SHAKE YOU FREE--FROM YER LIFE!
HIT 'IM, BOYS!
WELL, WELL--I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THE REST OF YOU PUNKS TO CRAWL OUT OF YOUR HOLES--


--BUT AFTER I'M THROUGH WITH YOU--
WAK!
SPLAT
--IF YOU HAVE ANY BRAINS LEFT AT ALL--
THRACK!
--YOU'LL CRAWL BACK INTO THOSE HOLES--
WHOKK
--AND PULL THE DIRT IN AFTER YOU!
GET THE POINT?
THUDD!
THEY'RE ALL OUT OF IT--BUT I FOUND WHAT I WAS LOOKING FOR--
--THE NEXT CLUE TO THE IDENTITY OF MR. E--
--THE MYSTERIOUS LEADER OF THE UNDERWORLD COMBINE CALLED THE CONCLAVE!
THIS SMUGGLING OPERATION WAS JUST AN INFINITESIMAL FRACTION OF THE CONCLAVE'S TOTAL ACTION AND...
UH-OH--LOOKS LIKE THE CONCLAVE WILL HAVE TO WAIT!
COMMISSIONER GORDON DOESN'T USE THE BAT-SIGNAL ANY MORE--UNLESS IT'S AN EMERGENCY!


.RECALL THE MOMENT--AS BRUCE WAYNE SAUNTERS AWAY DOWN A STERILE CORRIDOR TO BECOME THE DREADED BATMAN--
--AND HIS ASSOCIATE, NATHAN ELLERY, TAKES THE PUBLIC ELEVATOR DOWN TO THE TWILIT STREET--
--WHERE HE IS GREETED BY A SHINING, WHITE LIMOUSINE --
EVENING, MR. ELLERY!
GOOD EVENING, DRISCOLL!
--AND A FRIGHTENINGLY FAMILIAR PET...
WHERE TO TONIGHT, MR. E?
TO THE POTTER'S STREET WARE-HOUSE, DRISCOLL!
I HAVE SOME UNFINISHED BUSINESS AWAITING ME THERE!
ALONG GOTHAM'S MAIN BOULEVARDS, THE IVORY VEHICLE CHURNS--THEN THROUGH A DARKER, QUIETER PART OF TOWN--AND, FINALLY, DOWN A GRIMY ALLEYWAY--
--WHERE A SPECIAL SEQUENCE OF BLINKING HEADLIGHTS ROLLS BACK A THICK TITANIUM STEEL DOOR --
--TO REVEAL...
GOOD EVENING, DR. HAMMERSCHMIDT! AND HOW ARE OUR RELUCTANT GUESTS DOING THIS FINE NIGHT?
ACH--HERR E. VHAT A PLEASANT ZURPRISE TO SEE YOU!
HERR CABLE UND FRAULEIN ARCANE ARE DOINK SPLENDIDLY--
--BUT THEY STILL REFUSE TO TALK!

YOU STILL REFUSE? IN GOD'S NAME--WHY?
YOU KNOW WE WILL EVENTUALLY LEARN EVERYTHING--ONE WAY OR ANOTHER!
SUCK A PEACH, FAT MAN!
TSK TSK--SUCH VEHEMENCE, MATTHEW!
DR. HAMMER-SCHMIDT--GIVE MR. CABLE ANOTHER TASTE OF THE ELECTRON-CHAIR!
JA, HERR E.--MIT DER UTMOST PLEASURE! HEE HEE HEE!
DIE EFFECTS OF DER MACHINE NEFER CEASE TO FASCINATE ME!
TORTURE ME ALL YOU WANT, FAT MAN--BUT YOU WON'T GET ME TO TALK--
AARGGH!
LET US AVERT OUR EYES FROM THIS UNPLEASANT SCENE--AND FOCUS INSTEAD UPON A CERTAIN OFFICE IN THE HEART OF GOTHAM CITY...
YOU CALLED, COMMISSIONER?
WHO--? OH, BATMAN--YOU STARTLED ME!
WELL, WHAT I AM ABOUT TO SAY MAY STARTLE YOU!
THERE'S A MONSTER LOOSE IN GOTHAM, BATMAN--
NO JOKE--NO DELUSION--A DOZEN OF OUR BEST MEN HAVE SEEN HIM--
--AND THE GOVERNMENT CONFIRMS HIS EXISTENCE!
IN FACT, I WAS JUST GOING OVER THE GOVERNMENT'S SECRET FILE ON THE CREATURE WHEN YOU ARRIVED!
THE FILE'S CODE NAME IS--"SWAMP THING"!
IF THE PUBLIC WAS TO DISCOVER A SWAMP THING LURKING IN THEIR MIDST, IT COULD CREATE A CITY-WIDE PANIC!
THAT'S WHY I CALLED YOU, BATMAN--
--TO ASK YOU TO TRACK THAT MONSTER DOWN BEFORE THE PEOPLE BECOME AWARE!
THE MONSTER IS NOW DISGUISED, I'M TOLD--AND TRAVELLING IN THE COMPANY OF A SMALL ORANGE DOG!
SO THE SOONER YOU GET STARTED, BATMAN--THE BETTER IT WILL--! BATMAN?
OH!
CONTINUED ON 38 PAGE FOLLOWING.
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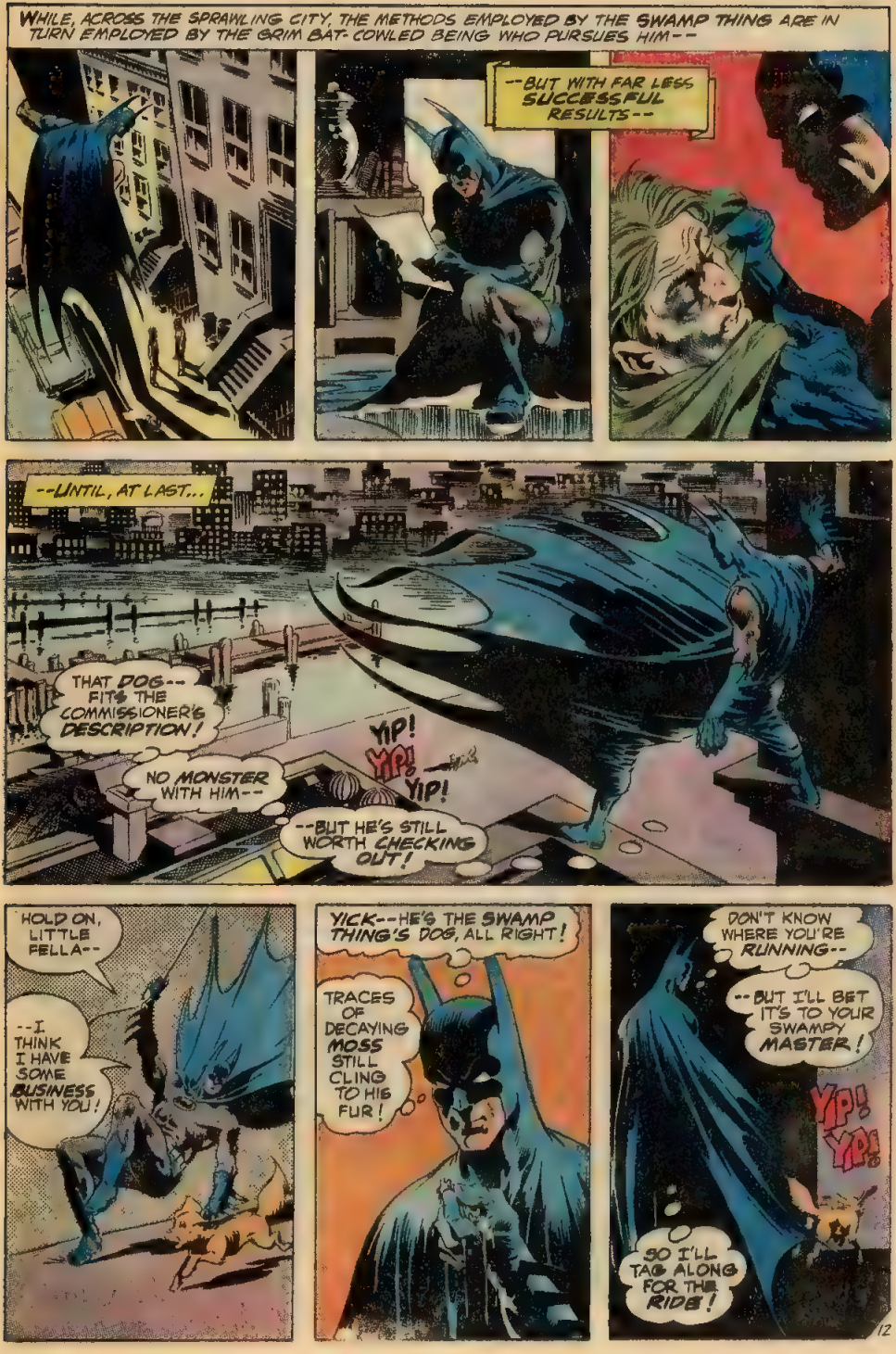
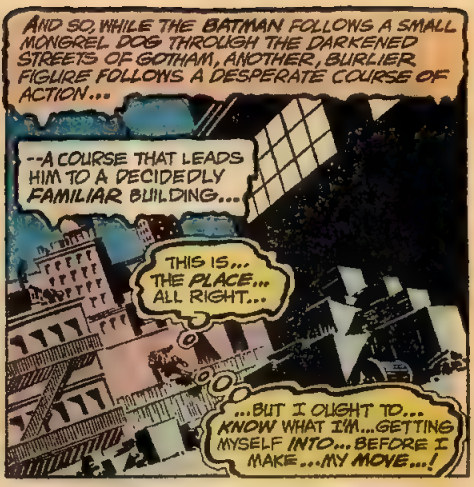
WHILE, IN A GRIMY ALLEYWAY ON GOTHAM'S LOWER EAST SIDE...
OKAY, MUTT... YOU WAIT HERE..!
THIS IS SOMETHING.. I HAVE TO DO... ALONE...!
BAR
PECK'S WATER'S EDGE Bar Grille
UGH...! THIS PLACE IS GRUBBIER... THAN I AM...
...BUT IF I'M EVER...GOING TO FIND A LEAD... TO CABLE'S WHEREABOUTS...
IT'S IN A JOINT... LIKE THIS ONE...!
ALL I'VE GOT TO DO... IS SIT QUIETLY...
STAY OUT OF SIGHT...
...AND KEEP MY EARS OPEN FOR...
WHAT'LL IT BE, PAL-- BEER?
UH-OH... BETTER JUST NOD...!
YEAH-- UH-- OKAY, PAL-- WHATEVER YA SAY..!
LORD, WHEN HE NODDED HIS HEAD, I THOUGHT IT WAS GONNA FALL OFF!
FOR A WHILE, THE SWAMP THING SITS, HIS BEER GROWING WARM IN HIS GREAT, MOSSY HAND--
UNTIL, AT LAST, HIS SILENT VIGIL BEARS FRUIT...
YEAH--IMAGINE-- THE CONCLAVE HIRIN' ME!
AIN'T MUCH TA START--JEST RE-PLACIN' SOME GUYS WHAT USED TA RUN A SMUGGLIN' OPER-ATION--BUT IT'LL GROW!
I'M S'POSED TA MEET MY CONTACT AT DE ADDRESS ON DIS PAPER--
--BUT I FIGURED FIRST I'D HAVE ME A BEER WIT' ME PALS AN'--
'EY--GIMME BACK DAT PAPER, YA LOUSY--!
NO... HE'S KNOCKED MY... HAT OFF...!
OH...MY... GOD...!

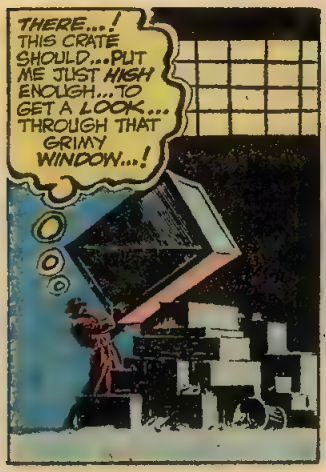
DON'T KNOW WHAT YA ARE, UGLY--
--BUT I'M GONNA HAVE DAT PAPER BACK!
FRIEND... ALL YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE...
...IS A SPLITTING HEADACHE...!
'EY--DAT'S ME PAL YOU'RE BEATIN' ON!
THRUNCH!
THAT'S NICE...
WITH ANY LUCK... THEY'LL GIVE YOU... ADJOINING BEDS... IN THE HOSPITAL...!
PAF!
AND MOMENTS LATER...
I DIDN'T MEAN... TO START THIS SORT OF RUCKUS...
...BUT THESE DRUNKEN IDIOTS... JUST WON'T QUIT COMING...!
WELL... WHETHER I STARTED IT... OR NOT...
...I'M DEFINITELY GOING TO... FINISH IT...!
BAR
CRASSHH!
OKAY, MUTT... LET'S GET MOVING...!
WE'VE FOUND OUR FIRST CLUE...! NOW LET'S FIND... MATT CABLE...!

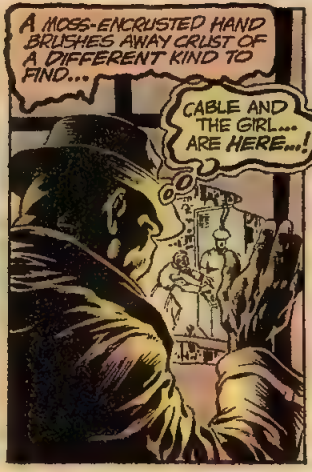
IT DOES NOT TAKE THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE LONG TO LEARN THE BASIC RUDIMENTS OF THE UNDER-WORLD'S INFORMATIONAL STRUCTURE : ONE CLUE LEADS TO ANOTHER--THEN ANOTHER--AND ANOTHER AFTER THAT--
--SOME GARNERED IN SHADOWED DOORWAYS--
--OTHERS FROM HASTILY-SCRAWLED NOTES--
--AND STILL OTHERS SPEWED FROM BE-TWEEN BLOODIED LIPS--
TIME TO TIE UP LOOSE ENDS, MY PET!
CABLE AND THE GIRL ARE OURS--AND THE SWAMP THING HAS DISAPPEARED!
ONLY THE DOG REMAINS--
--AND THIS RADIO FREQUENCY SHOULD REACT MOST INTERESTINGLY UPON THE TRANSMITTER WE PLANTED INSIDE THE MONGREL'S HEAD!*
* SEE SWAMP THING #1
...POTTER'S STREET... WAREHOUSE...!
IF THIS PUNK... DIDN'T LIE TO US, MUTT...
...THAT'S WHERE WE'LL FIND... MATT CABLE...!
BUT AS THE SWAMP THING TURNS, HIS FURRY COMPANION SQUIRMS FROM HIS GRASP AND...
HEY...! WHERE ARE YOU... GOING, MUTT...?
HEY...! WHAT'S WRONG... WITH YOU...?
COME BACK HERE... COME...
YIP!
YIP!
YIP!

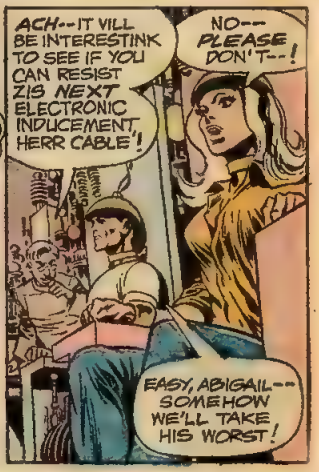

WHILE, ACROSS THE SPRAWLING CITY, THE METHODS EMPLOYED BY THE SWAMP THING ARE IN TURN EMPLOYED BY THE GRIM BAT-COWLED BEING WHO PURSUES HIM--
--BUT WITH FAR LESS SUCCESSFUL RESULTS--
--UNTIL, AT LAST...
THAT DOG-- FITS THE COMMISSIONER'S DESCRIPTION!
NO MONSTER WITH HIM--
YIP! YIP! YIP!
--BUT HE'S STILL WORTH CHECKING OUT!
HOLD ON, LITTLE FELLA--
--I THINK I HAVE SOME BUSINESS WITH YOU!
YICK--HE'S THE SWAMP THING'S DOG, ALL RIGHT!
TRACES OF DECAYING MOSS STILL CLING TO HIS FUR!
DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE RUNNING--
--BUT I'LL BET IT'S TO YOUR SWAMPY MASTER!
YIP! YIP!
SO I'LL TAG ALONG FOR THE RIDE!

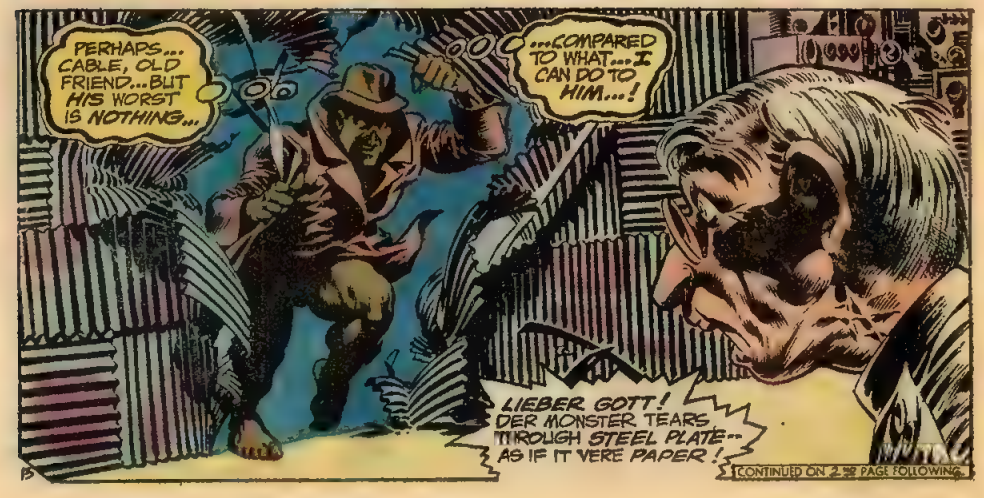
BLAST,... MUTT'S GONE...
...AND I HAVEN'T GOT... TIME NOW TO CHASE... AFTER HIM...!
GOT TO GET... TO CABLE QUICKLY...
...OR IT MAY BE... TOO LATE...!

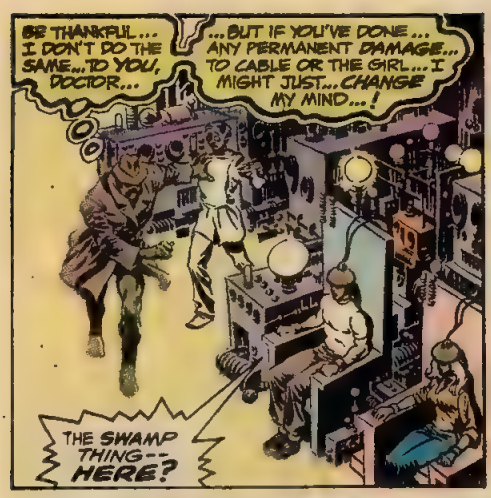

AND SO, WHILE THE BATMAN FOLLOWS A SMALL MONGREL DOG THROUGH THE DARKENED STREETS OF GOTHAM, ANOTHER, BURLIER FIGURE FOLLOWS A DESPERATE COURSE OF ACTION...
--A COURSE THAT LEADS HIM TO A DECIDEDLY FAMILIAR BUILDING...
THIS IS... THE PLACE... ALL RIGHT...
...BUT I OUGHT TO... KNOW WHAT I'M...GETTING MYSELF INTO... BEFORE I MAKE...MY MOVE...!


THERE...! THIS CRATE SHOULD...PUT ME JUST HIGH ENOUGH...TO GET A LOOK... THROUGH THAT GRIMY WINDOW...!


A MOSS-ENCRUSTED HAND BRUSHES AWAY CRUST OF A DIFFERENT KIND TO FIND...
CABLE AND THE GIRL... ARE HERE...!


ACH--IT VILL BE INTERESTINK TO SEE IF YOU CAN RESIST ZIS NEXT ELECTRONIC INDUCEMENT, HERR CABLE!
NO--- PLEASE DON'T--!
EASY, ABIGAIL--- SOMEHOW WE'LL TAKE HIS WORST!

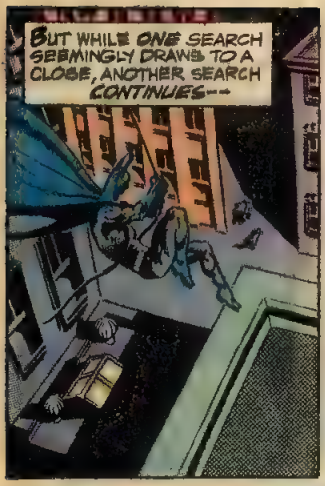

PERHAPS... CABLE, OLD FRIEND...BUT HIS WORST IS NOTHING...
...COMPARED TO WHAT...I CAN DO TO HIM...!
LIEBER GOTT! DER MONSTER TEARS THROUGH STEEL PLATE-- AS IF IT VERE PAPER!
CONTINUED ON 2½ PAGE FOLLOWING


BE THANKFUL... I DON'T DO THE SAME...TO YOU, DOCTOR...
...BUT IF YOU'VE DONE... ANY PERMANENT DAMAGE... TO CABLE OR THE GIRL... I MIGHT JUST... CHANGE MY MIND...!
THE SWAMP THING--- HERE?

I DON'T GET IT--I DON'T UNDERSTAND--!
FIRST YOU HELP MURDER MY TWO BEST FRIENDS--- THEN YOU KEEP POPPING UP TO SAVE MY LIFE!
WHY, MONSTER-- WHY?
SNAK!!
EVEN IF I COULD... TELL YOU, MATTHEW... YOU'D NEVER... BELIEVE ME...!

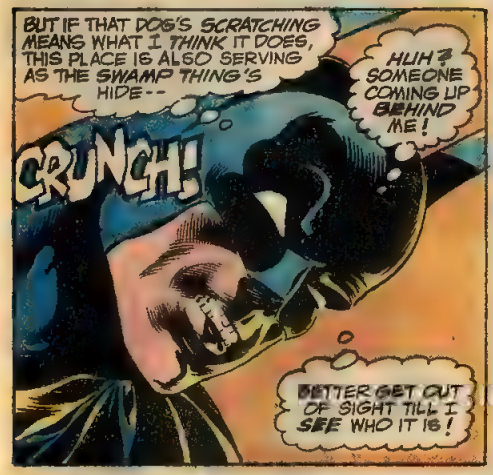
HAMMERSCHMIDT TO MR. E--- EMERGENCY--- CONDITION RED!
DIE CREATURE YOU VARNED US ABOUT--DIE CREATURE WHO KILLED FERRETT--- IS HERE! HE'S HERE!
FERRETT!?!
AT THE NAME, THE SWAMP THING TURNS--- AND, FOR AN INSTANT, HIS MIND IS AWASH WITH MEMORIES...

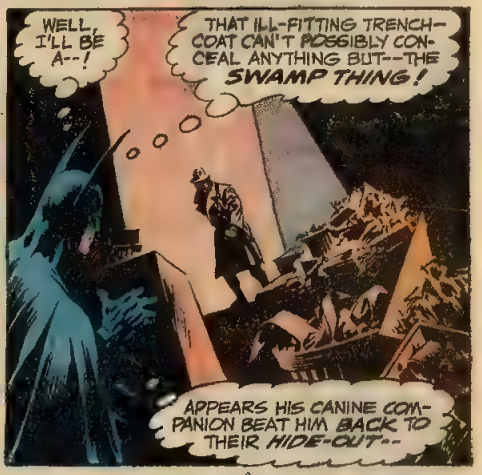
FERRETT, WHO, REPRESENTING A MYSTERIOUS COMBINE, ATTEMPTED TO BUY DR. ALEC HOLLAND'S BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA-
--AND, FAILING THAT, ARRANGED AN EXPLOSION THAT TORE HOLLAND'S MARSHLAND LAB APART--
--AND HURLED THE DOCTOR'S CHEMICAL-SEARED BODY DEEP INTO THE CLUTCHING MUCK--
--TO RISE FROM THE BOG SOMETIME LATER AS A TWISTED, SHAMBLING MOCKERY OF LIFE...
--ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT DEATH HAD CLAIMED HIS LOVING WIFE, LINDA, AT FERRETT'S TAINTED HAND!
IN THE LONG WEEKS SINCE, THIS THING THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND HAS SEARCHED FOR FERRETT'S EMPLOYER--THE MAN RESPONSIBLE FOR IT ALL--
--BUT HE HAS SEARCHED THE WORLD IN VAIN---
--UNTIL NOW!

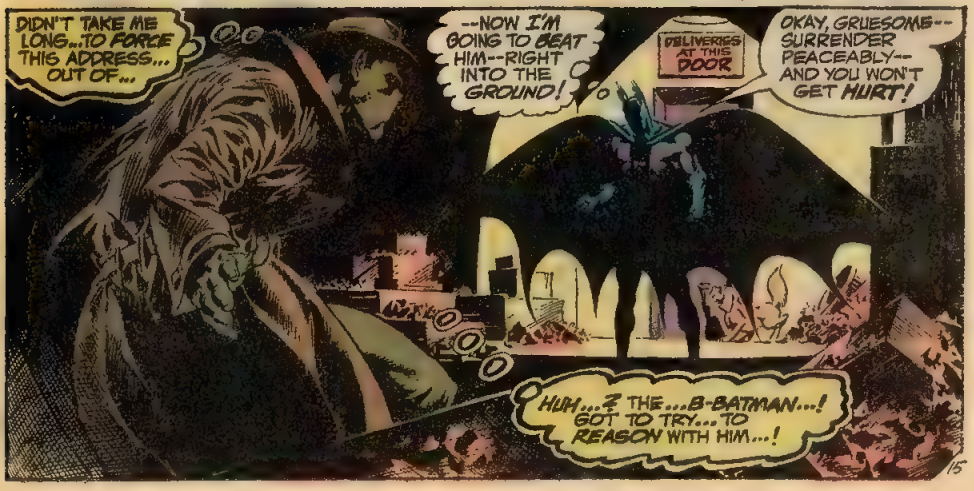

BUT WHILE ONE SEARCH SEEMINGLY DRAWS TO A CLOSE, ANOTHER SEARCH CONTINUES--

--DOWN DARK AND DESERTED ALLEYWAYS--
YIP! YIP! YIP!

--UNTIL, FINALLY--
WHAT IN--?
DELIVERIES AT THIS DOOR
NATHAN ELLERY'S PENTHOUSE APARTMENT OCCUPIES THE WHOLE TOP FLOOR OF THIS BUILDING!


BUT IF THAT DOG'S SCRATCHING MEANS WHAT I THINK IT DOES, THIS PLACE IS ALSO SERVING AS THE SWAMP THING'S HIDE--
HUH? SOMEONE COMING UP BEHIND ME!
CRUNCH!
BETTER GET OUT OF SIGHT TILL I SEE WHO IT IS!

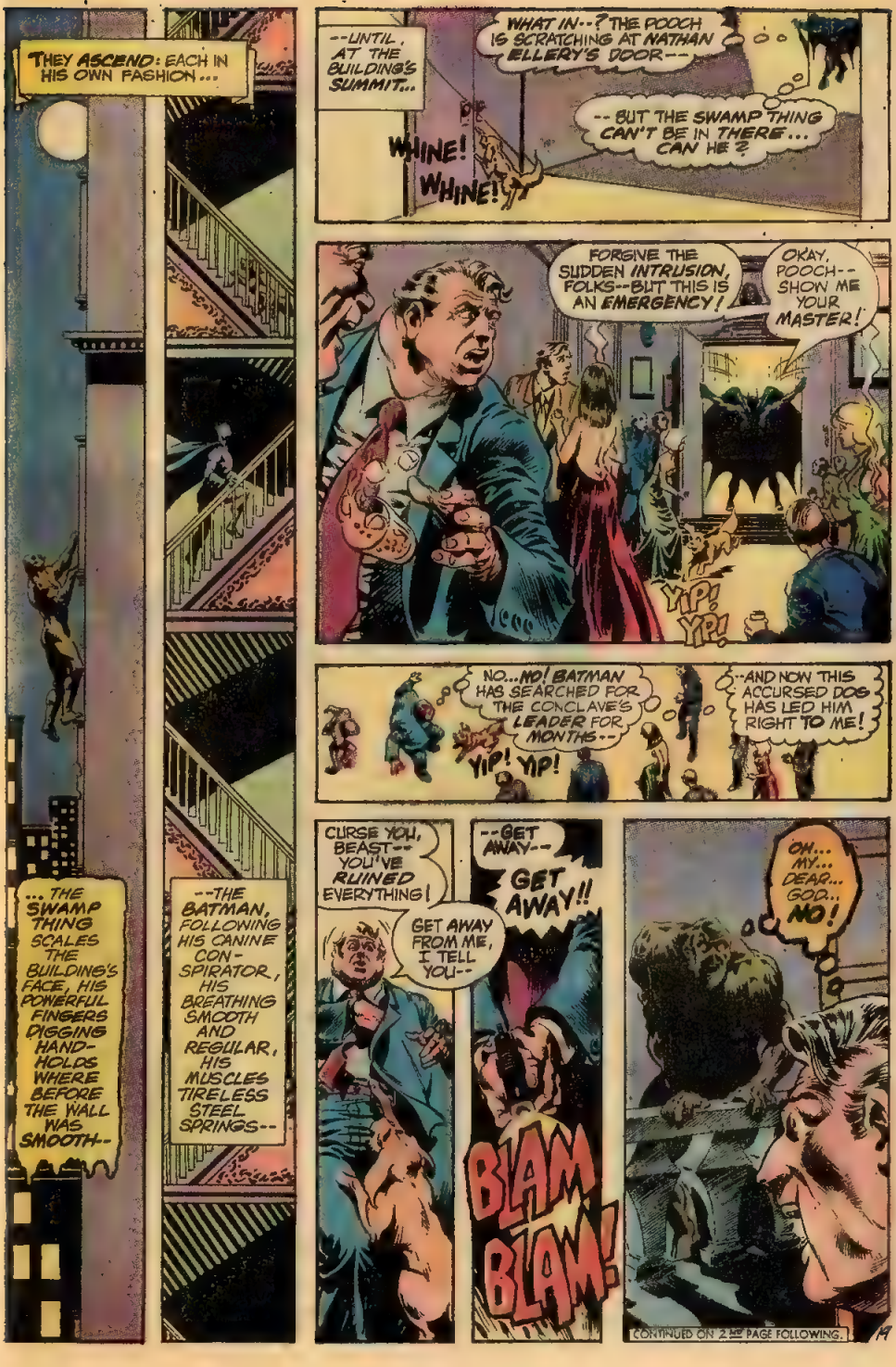

WELL, I'LL BE A--!
THAT ILL-FITTING TRENCH-COAT CAN'T POSSIBLY CONCEAL ANYTHING BUT--THE SWAMP THING!
APPEARS HIS CANINE COMPANION BEAT HIM BACK TO THEIR HIDE-OUT--

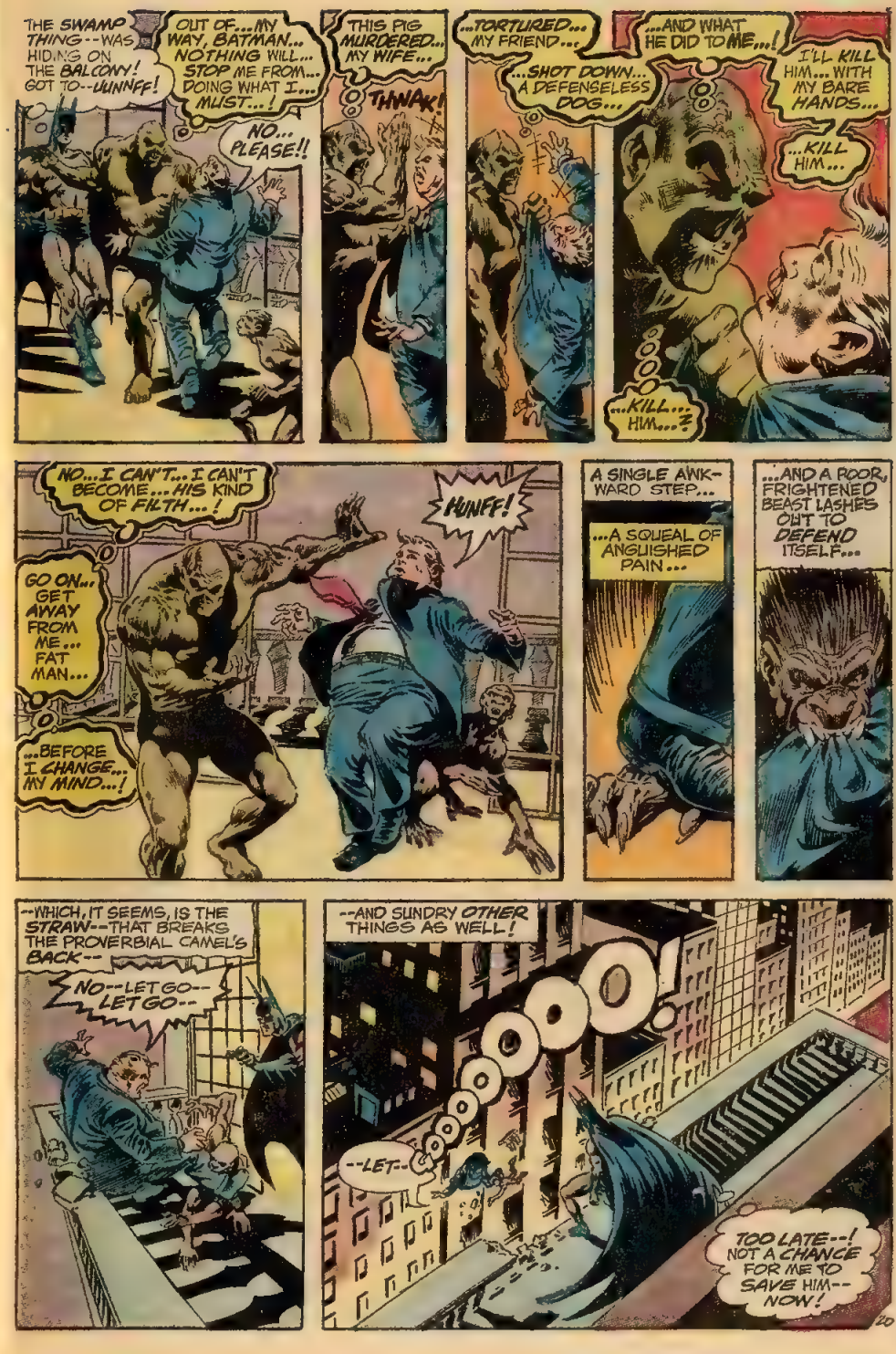

DIDN'T TAKE ME LONG...TO FORCE THIS ADDRESS... OUT OF...
--NOW I'M GOING TO BEAT HIM--RIGHT INTO THE GROUND!
DELIVERIES AT THIS DOOR
OKAY, GRUESOME--SURRENDER PEACEABLY--AND YOU WON'T GET HURT!
HUH...? THE...B-BATMAN...! GOT TO TRY...TO REASON WITH HIM...!

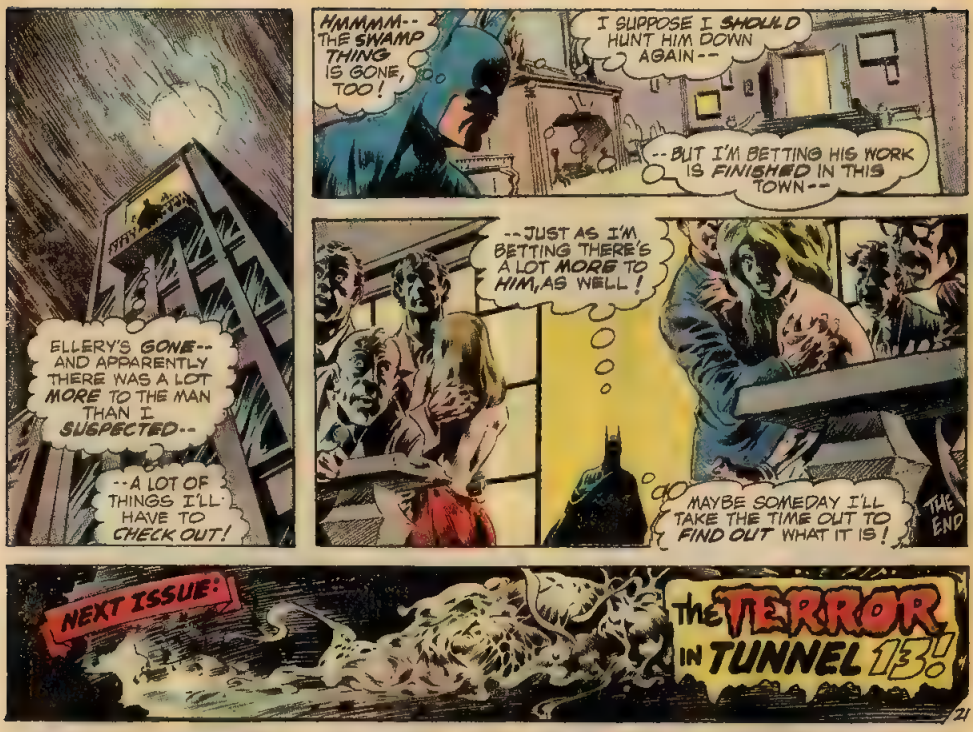
THWUCK
SORRY, UGLY--BUT YOU'RE NOT GETTING THOSE HAM-HOCK HANDS ON ME!
NO...PLEASE...YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...! I DON'T WANT...TO FIGHT YOU...!
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND ME, DO YOU, MONSTER?
I SAID I'M TAKING YOU IN--
THUD!
--IN HAND-CUFFS-- OR A BOX!
THE CHOICE IS YOURS!
AMAZING--! THAT WOODEN CRATE--MY FIST!
--IT'S ALMOST AS IF HE DOESN'T EVEN FEEL THEM!
THWAK
PLEASE... HOW CAN I...MAKE YOU UNDER-STAND...?
THAT'S PECULIAR! NOW THE THING IS HIDING BEHIND A TRASH-CAN--
--PROBABLY PREPARING SOME SURPRISE ATTACK!
THIS IS WORKING OUT... ALL WRONG...!
I CAN'T... FIGHT HIM... I CAN'T...!
WELL, I'M CAPABLE OF A SURPRISE OR TWO MYSELF!
CHROOM!
16

COME ON, YOU UGLY MONSTER-- FALL--FALL!
HE KEEPS COMING...
THUD
...HE WON'T QUIT...!
WHAT CAN I DO...TO COMMUNICATE... WITH HIM...?
TWACK!
HOW CAN I...MAKE HIM SEE...?
NO...IT'S BECOMING OBVIOUS... I CAN'T MAKE HIM SEE...!
THIS MAN... WILL JUST KEEP COMING... UNTIL ONE OF US...IS DEAD...!
IT'S A SHAME... REALLY...!
I WAS HOPING...TO AVOID THIS...
SMACK
HUH? MY FIST--
--HE'S STOPPED IT COLD!
...BUT YOU BROUGHT IT ON YOUR-SELF...!
SORRY, HERO... BUT YOUR BLIND...DEDI-CATION TO DUTY... CAN SOMETIMES MAKE YOU...MOST ANNOYING...!
THUDD!
...HE SHOULD BE OUT... FOR QUITE A WHILE...
...WHICH WILL BE... PLENTY OF TIME...FOR ME TO DO... WHAT I'VE COME TO DO...THEN LEAVE THIS...?
HEY... WHAT IS THE MATTER WITH YOU, MUTT...?
WHINE! WHINE!
WHY DO YOU PERSIST... IN SQUIRMING LIKE...

HEY...BLAST YOU... COME BACK HERE...!
WE'RE NOT... GOING THROUGH ANOTHER SCENE... LIKE THE LAST...
YIP!
YIP!
YIP!
WHAT IS IT, MUTT...?
WHY ARE YOU... SCRATCHING AT THE...
...HUH...?
DELIVERIES AT THIS DOOR
SCRATCH!
IMPOSSIBLE...! BATMAN CAN'T BE... RECOVERING FROM THAT BLOW... ALREADY...!?
BETTER GET... OUT OF SIGHT... QUICKLY...!
ANOTHER SCUFFLE WITH HIM... IS THE LAST THING I NEED...!
DAMN! THE SWAMP THING'S GONE!
BUT THAT DOG OF HIS IS STILL HERE--
--SCRATCHING AT THAT DOOR LIKE HIS LIFE DEPENDED ON IT!
YIP!
YIP!
IT'LL TAKE THE POOCH MONTHS TO SCRATCH HIS WAY INSIDE--
PICK!
PICK!
PICK!
--UNLESS I MAKE THINGS A LITTLE EASIER FOR HIM!
OKAY, LITTLE FELLA--IF YOUR MASTER HAS GOTTEN PAST ME AND INTO THIS BUILDING--
YIP!
YIP!
--I WANT YOU TO SHOW ME WHERE HE'S GONE!


THEY ASCEND: EACH IN HIS OWN FASHION...
...THE SWAMP THING SCALES THE BUILDING'S FACE, HIS POWERFUL FINGERS DIGGING HAND-HOLDS WHERE BEFORE THE WALL WAS SMOOTH--
--THE BATMAN, FOLLOWING HIS CANINE CONSPIRATOR, HIS BREATHING SMOOTH AND REGULAR, HIS MUSCLES TIRELESS STEEL SPRINGS--
--UNTIL, AT THE BUILDING'S SUMMIT...
WHINE! WHINE!
WHAT IN--? THE POOCH IS SCRATCHING AT NATHAN ELLERY'S DOOR--
--BUT THE SWAMP THING CAN'T BE IN THERE... CAN HE?
FORGIVE THE SUDDEN INTRUSION, FOLKS--BUT THIS IS AN EMERGENCY!
OKAY, POOCH--SHOW ME YOUR MASTER!
YIP! YIP!
NO...NO! BATMAN HAS SEARCHED FOR THE CONCLAVE'S LEADER FOR MONTHS--
--AND NOW THIS ACCURSED DOG HAS LED HIM RIGHT TO ME!
YIP! YIP!
CURSE YOU, BEAST--YOU'VE RUINED EVERYTHING!
GET AWAY FROM ME, I TELL YOU--
--GET AWAY--
GET AWAY!!
BLAM BLAM!
OH... MY... DEAR... GOD... NO!
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.
14


THE SWAMP THING--WAS HIDING ON THE BALCONY! GOT TO--UUNNFF!
OUT OF...MY WAY, BATMAN... NOTHING WILL... STOP ME FROM... DOING WHAT I... MUST...!
NO... PLEASE!!
THIS PIG MURDERED... MY WIFE...
THNAK!
...TORTURED... MY FRIEND...
...SHOT DOWN... A DEFENSELESS DOG...
...AND WHAT HE DID TO ME...!
I'LL KILL HIM... WITH MY BARE HANDS...
...KILL HIM...
...KILL... HIM...?
NO...I CAN'T...I CAN'T BECOME...HIS KIND OF FILTH...!
HUNFF!
GO ON... GET AWAY FROM ME... FAT MAN...
...BEFORE I CHANGE... MY MIND...!
A SINGLE AWK-WARD STEP...
...A SQUEAL OF ANGUISHED PAIN...
...AND A POOR, FRIGHTENED BEAST LASHES OUT TO DEFEND ITSELF...
--WHICH, IT SEEMS, IS THE STRAW--THAT BREAKS THE PROVERBIAL CAMEL'S BACK--
NO--LET GO-- LET GO--
--AND SUNDRY OTHER THINGS AS WELL!
--LET--
TOO LATE--! NOT A CHANCE FOR ME TO SAVE HIM-- NOW!


ELLERY'S GONE-- AND APPARENTLY THERE WAS A LOT MORE TO THE MAN THAN I SUSPECTED--
--A LOT OF THINGS I'LL HAVE TO CHECK OUT!
HMMMM-- THE SWAMP THING IS GONE, TOO!
I SUPPOSE I SHOULD HUNT HIM DOWN AGAIN--
--BUT I'M BETTING HIS WORK IS FINISHED IN THIS TOWN--
--JUST AS I'M BETTING THERE'S A LOT MORE TO HIM, AS WELL!
MAYBE SOMEDAY I'LL TAKE THE TIME OUT TO FIND OUT WHAT IT IS!
THE END

21

SWAMP THINGS

J-3226

Dear Joe:

I have read that you plan to implant Batman into the Swamp Thing saga. May such a terrible thing never happen! The Swamp Thing series has the art, character, and plot power to survive independently of any other, more established character.

"Monster On The Moors" was a mind-boggling classic. It's *wright sensational* (Ouch!)

William G. Laks, Poughkeepsie, N.Y.

Dear William,

Batman is not being featured in this issue in order to "exploit" either the caped crusader or our own Swamp Thing. It was done for the fun of it, or perhaps the desire to see our next correspondent's hopes come true . . .

Dear Editor,

I just wanted to let you know what a fine job you're doing on Swamp Thing. Your fourth issue in particular reminded me of a Hammer film. I say this because of the way in which different scenes slowly built up to a senses-shattering climax. The Hammer films, however, disappointingly build up to climaxes that never take place. You, on the other hand, did not deprive us of any scenes of your vicious carnivore. Page 17, panel 2, depicted the most horrifying werewolf I've ever had the pleasure of viewing in any comic mag or movie.

Incidentally, I've heard that the Swamp Thing is due to meet Batman in a forthcoming issue. I look forward to seeing the Caped Crusader as the frightening avenger he should be, and I'm quite sure that Berni is going to show Neal Adams what it's all about.

Joe Rusnak, Montville, New Jersey

Dear Joe,

Thanks for your analysis, and I'd like to hear from you now that you've read the story of "The Night Of The Bat!"

Dear Joe:

The plot of the fourth Swamp Thing left a bit to be desired. From many writers, I'd accept it as the best they could do, but not from Len Wein. There was practically no originality in the plot! Of course, the story wasn't completely bad. The mood was captured superbly by Wrightson's excellent art, making this possibly the best rendering of the werewolf legend I've seen. The plot, once the points are taken off for originality, was pretty good, too.

Richard H. Morrissey, Framingham, Mass.

Dear Richard,

Seriously, the scripting of Swamp Thing is heading off in new directions, as you will see in the next few issues.

Where are your letters? If you don't want the Swamp Thing to come and collect them in person, send them to: SWAMP THINGS, c/o NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS, INC., 75 ROCKEFELLER PLAZA, NEW YORK, N.Y. 10019

THE LINE OF
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SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
20¢
NO. 8
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SWAMP THING

SWAMP THING
FOR YOUR INFORMATION: THE FREEZING POINT OF WATER IS 32 DEGREES FARENHEIT, AND WHEN THE TEMPERATURE FALLS BELOW THIS POINT, RAIN BECOMES SNOW...
THE FREEZING POINT OF YOUR AVERAGE PLANT IS NOT TERRIBLY DIFFERENT FROM THAT OF RAIN-- AND WHEN THIS POINT IS REACHED, SAID PLANT'S METABOLIC RATE DECREASES SHARPLY, SLOWING TO ALMOST A CRAWL...
ALL OF WHICH SHOULD HELP TO EXPLAIN THE TERRIBLE SLUGGISHNESS FELT BY A CERTAIN MOSSY MAN-BRUTE AS HE SHAMBLES THROUGH A SNOW-SWEPT APPALACHIAN WOOD...
THE LURKER IN TUNNEL 13!
A PRESENTATION
LEN WEIN (WRITER)
BERNI WRIGHTSON (ILLUSTRATOR)
JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR)

J-3274

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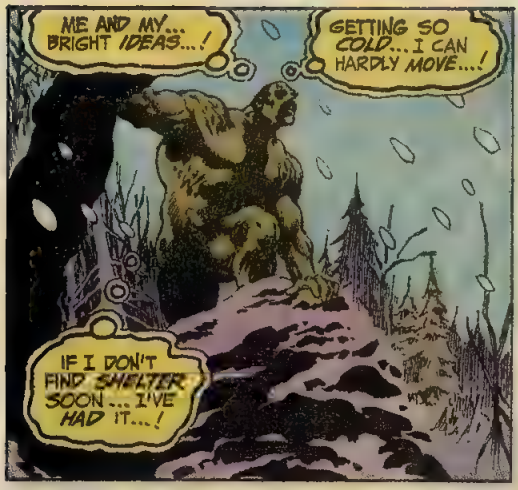
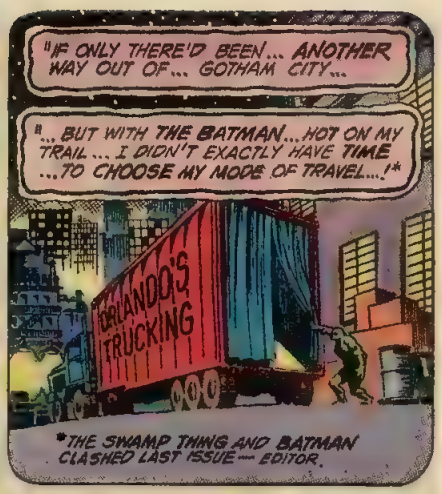
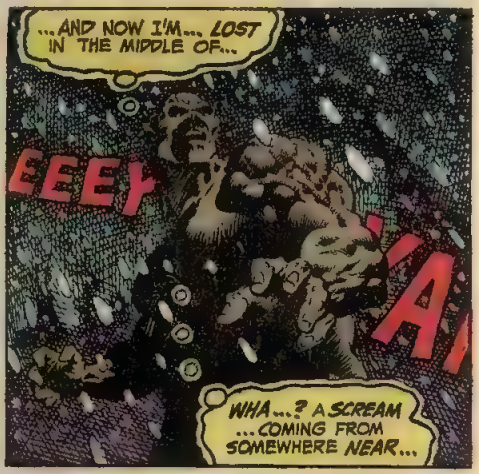
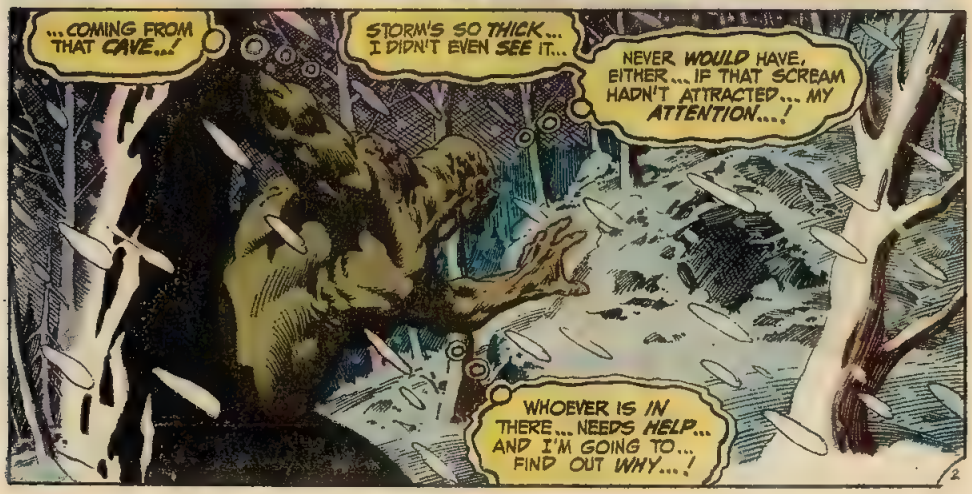

ME AND MY... BRIGHT IDEAS...!
GETTING SO COLD... I CAN HARDLY MOVE...!
IF I DON'T FIND SHELTER SOON... I'VE HAD IT...!


"IF ONLY THERE'D BEEN... ANOTHER WAY OUT OF... GOTHAM CITY...
"... BUT WITH THE BATMAN... HOT ON MY TRAIL... I DIDN'T EXACTLY HAVE TIME ...TO CHOOSE MY MODE OF TRAVEL...!*
ORLANDO'S TRUCKING
*THE SWAMP THING AND BATMAN CLASHED LAST ISSUE — EDITOR.

"DIDN'T EVEN HAVE COURAGE ENOUGH... TO STAY WITH THE TRUCK ONCE WE... WERE OUT OF TOWN...
DINER
ORLANDO'S TRUCKING
"FIRST STOP THE DRIVER MADE... I GOT OFF..."

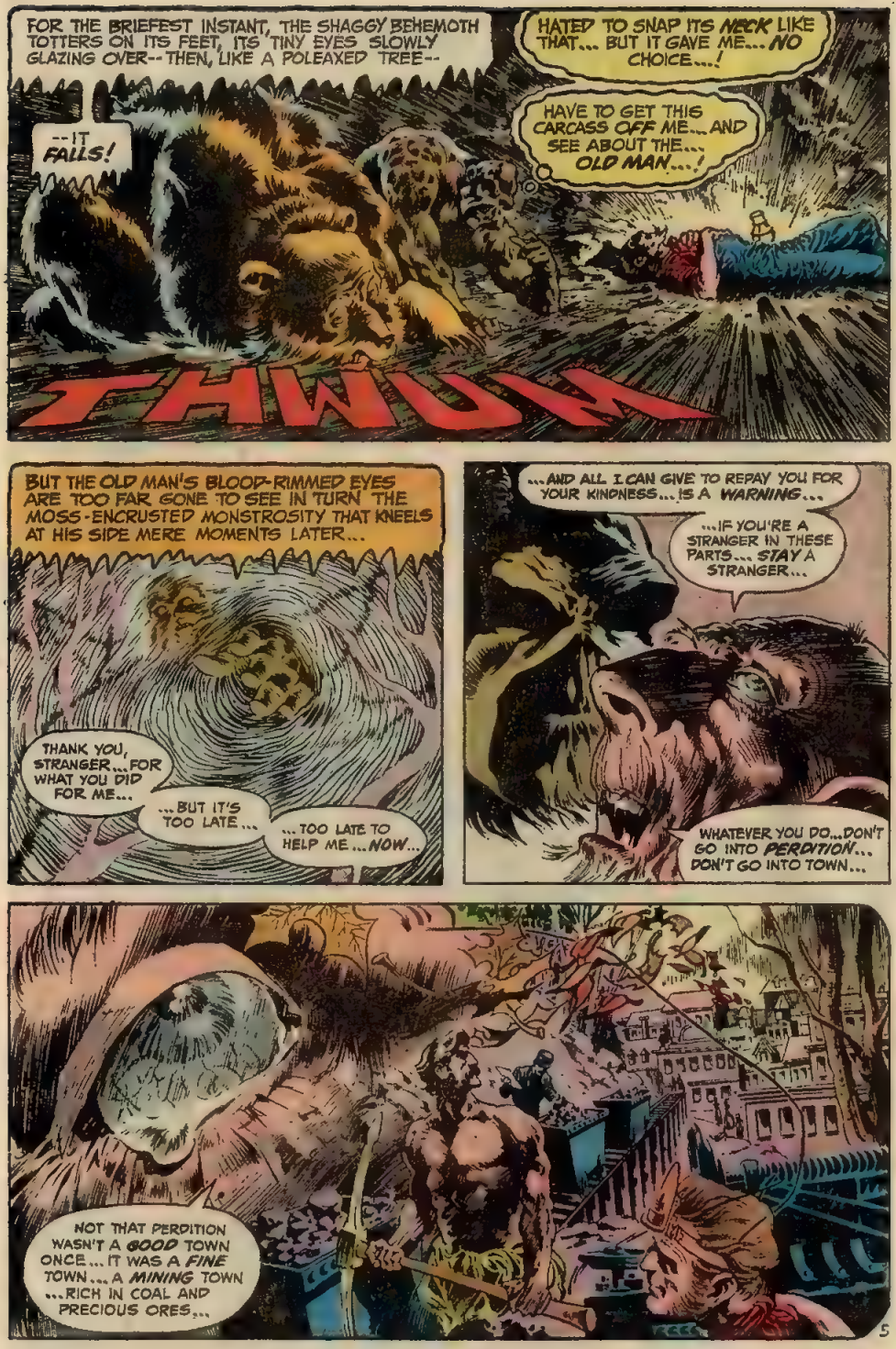

...AND NOW I'M... LOST IN THE MIDDLE OF...
EEEY
WHA...? A SCREAM ...COMING FROM SOMEWHERE NEAR...


...COMING FROM THAT CAVE...!
STORM'S SO THICK... I DIDN'T EVEN SEE IT...
NEVER WOULD HAVE, EITHER... IF THAT SCREAM HADN'T ATTRACTED... MY ATTENTION...!
WHOEVER IS IN THERE... NEEDS HELP... AND I'M GOING TO... FIND OUT WHY...!
2

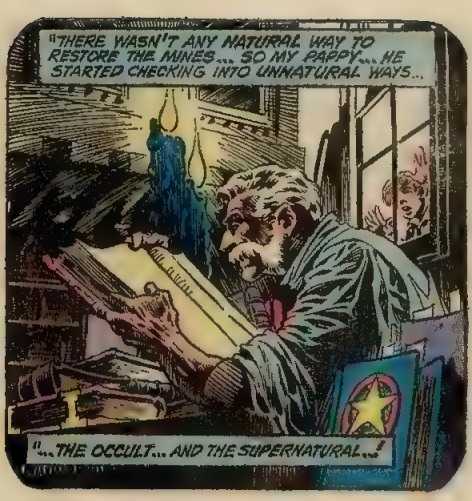
GOOD GOD!
A LITTLE OLD MAN... AND THE BIGGEST BEAR I'VE EVER SEEN...!
GGRRRAARRGGHH
HELP... PLEASE... MY CHEST ...THE PAIN...
THE POOR GUY MUST HAVE... STUMBLED INTO ITS DEN BY ACCIDENT... AND DISTURBED THE GRIZZLY'S SLEEP...!
UH OH... APPEARS MR. BEAR DOESN'T WANT COMPANY ...OF ANY KIND...!
WELL... AT LEAST I TOOK HIS ATTENTION ... OFF THE OLD-TIMER...
UURRRNN
UURRRRR ???
...I AM A TRIFLE HARDER TO HANDLE...THAN YOUR AVERAGE OLD MAN...!
...AND FRIEND BEAR WILL SOON LEARN...
THE BEAR WILL BE ... OUT FOR A WHILE...! I'D BETTER CHECK ON...
LORD...! MAN IS TORN UP ... BADLY...!
PLEASE...PLEASE HELP ME...
TAKE IT EASY ...OLD-TIMER... AND I'LL DO WHAT I...
RRRAARGGG
SWOK!
UUNNGG!

UUNNFF... LOOKS LIKE ALL I DID... WAS MAKE THE GRIZZLY... ANGRY...!
IF I WAS HUMAN....THAT SWIPE WOULD HAVE...TORN ME WIDE OPEN...!
RRAKK
RRRUURRR
UURRRR
COME ON, BEAR... BACK OFF...GO BACK TO SLEEP...!
DON'T FORCE ME TO... HURT YOU...!
RRRAAARRNN!
UUHHNN... WHO WAS I KIDDING...? ME HURT HIM...?
HE HAS ME IN.... A BEAR HUG... THAT WILL BREAK MY BACK... IF I DON'T GET LOOSE... AND QUICKLY...
RRUUHH!
...BUT I WILL GET LOOSE... IF I CAN ONLY GAIN...SOME LEVERAGE TO...
GOT IT...! NOW I HAVE TO.... PUSH...
CRACK!
...PUSH...AND KEEP PUSHING ... HARDER AND HARDER... UNTIL....

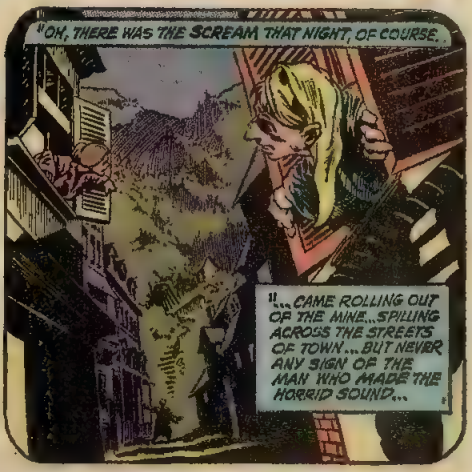
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING.


FOR THE BRIEFEST INSTANT, THE SHAGGY BEHEMOTH TOTTERS ON ITS FEET, ITS TINY EYES SLOWLY GLAZING OVER-- THEN, LIKE A POLEAXED TREE--
--IT FALLS!
HATED TO SNAP ITS NECK LIKE THAT... BUT IT GAVE ME... NO CHOICE...!
HAVE TO GET THIS CARCASS OFF ME... AND SEE ABOUT THE... OLD MAN...!
THWUK
BUT THE OLD MAN'S BLOOD-RIMMED EYES ARE TOO FAR GONE TO SEE IN TURN THE MOSS-ENCRUSTED MONSTROSITY THAT KNEELS AT HIS SIDE MERE MOMENTS LATER...
THANK YOU, STRANGER... FOR WHAT YOU DID FOR ME...
...BUT IT'S TOO LATE...
...TOO LATE TO HELP ME... NOW...
...AND ALL I CAN GIVE TO REPAY YOU FOR YOUR KINDNESS... IS A WARNING...
...IF YOU'RE A STRANGER IN THESE PARTS... STAY A STRANGER...
WHATEVER YOU DO... DON'T GO INTO PERDITION... DON'T GO INTO TOWN...
NOT THAT PERDITION WASN'T A GOOD TOWN ONCE... IT WAS A FINE TOWN... A MINING TOWN ...RICH IN COAL AND PRECIOUS ORES...

"... BUT THEN THE COAL RAN OUT... AND THE PEOPLE STARTED RUNNING OUT AS WELL...


"THERE WASN'T ANY NATURAL WAY TO RESTORE THE MINES... SO MY PAPPY... HE STARTED CHECKING INTO UNNATURAL WAYS...
"...THE OCCULT... AND THE SUPERNATURAL...!

"THEN, ONE NIGHT... I GUESS HE THOUGHT HE WAS READY...
"HE GATHERED UP ALL THE MYSTIC BOOKS AND SUCH HE'D BEEN COLLECTING... AND CARRIED THEM INTO THE MINE...
"... AND THAT WAS THE LAST ANYONE EVER SAW OF MY PAPPY...


"OH, THERE WAS THE SCREAM, THAT NIGHT, OF COURSE.
"... CAME ROLLING OUT OF THE MINE... SPILLING ACROSS THE STREETS OF TOWN... BUT NEVER ANY SIGN OF THE MAN WHO MADE THE HORRID SOUND...

"... THINGS HAVEN'T BEEN THE SAME IN PERDITION SINCE THEN... THE STRANGE DISAPPEARANCES OF ANYBODY GOING TOO CLOSE TO THE MINES...
"... THE GNAWING FEAR THAT EVERYBODY LIVES THERE WITH...
"... AND THE FACT THAT SINCE MY PAPPY VANISHED ... NOBODY ELSE HAS EVER LEFT TOWN..."

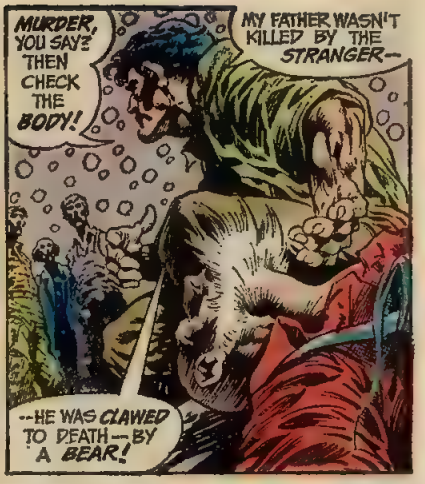
...UNTIL ME, THAT IS...
I WAS LEAVING TOWN... I WAS RUNNING FROM IT... WHEN I MET UP WITH THAT BEAR...
NOW, I GUESS ...THEY'LL NEVER GET ME BACK THERE AGA... UUNNHHN...
OLD MAN...?
HE'S... GONE...!

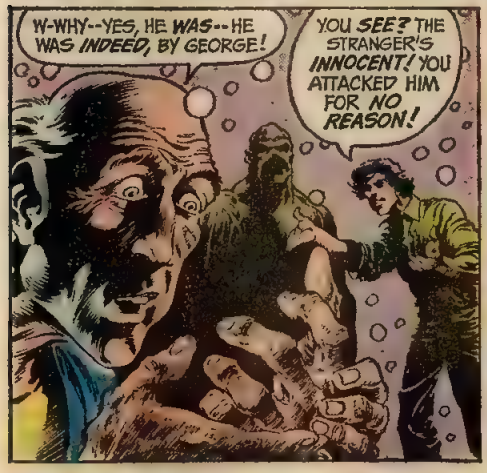
THE FALLING SNOW IS COLD --- COLDER, PERHAPS, THAN IT WAS A SHORT WHILE BEFORE--
--BUT A SOLEMN SWAMP THING NO LONGER SEEMS TO FEEL THE COLD AS HE CARRIES A FRAIL, LIMP BURDEN SEEMINGLY ENDLESSLY THROUGH THE IVORY-FROSTED WOODS...
COULDN'T JUST LEAVE THE OLD MAN... IN THE CAVE...!
HE SHOULD HAVE A... PROPER BURIAL...! HIS FAMILY SHOULD BE NOTIFIED...
...IF HE HAS ONE...
STILL... I CAN'T CARRY HIM FOREVER...!
HAVE TO FIND SOMEWHERE... TO TAKE HIM... DECIDE SOME DESTINATION ...BEFORE I CAN...
GOOD LORD...!
IT SEEMS MY DECISION ...HAS BEEN MADE... FOR ME...!
UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS... BY A LONG SHOT... THIS IS THE TOWN... OF PERDITION...!
I'VE CARRIED THE OLD MAN --- HOME...!

BUT AS THE MOSS-ENCRUSTED MAN-BRUTE SHAMBLES ALONG THE DECREPIT TOWN'S MAIN STREET...
OH, MILORD, HECTOR-- LOOK!
IT--IT'S SOME SORT'A MONSTER-- AN' HE'S KILLED OLD EZEKIEL!
MONSTER, HUH?
WELL, WE'LL SHOW IT NO BLAMED MONSTER KIN KILL ONE'A OUR PEOPLE AN' GIT AWAY WITH IT!
OH, NO... NOT ANOTHER MINDLESS MOB...!?!
WHEREVER I GO...
SMASH!
...I'M ATTACKED BY WEAPON-WIELDING CRETINS...
...AND TO TELL THE HONEST TRUTH...
CHUK!
LORDY-- IT AIN'T POSSIBLE-!
...I'M SICK AND TIRED OF IT...!
WHUMP!

NOBODY DOES THAT TO HECTOR, DO YA HEAR ME--?
NOBODY!!
SO YOU GO ON AN' STAND THERE, MONSTER--
--'CAUSE WHEN ME AN' THE BOYS GETS FINISHED WITH YA, YOU AIN'T NEVER GONNA BE ABLE TO STAND AG--
ALL RIGHT--THAT'LL BE JUST ENOUGH OF THIS MADNESS!
HOLD IT, HECTOR--FOLKS IS COMIN'!
NO LONGER COMING... LITTLE MAN.... THEY'RE HERE....
...BUT HAVE THEY COME... TO GIVE ME MORE TROUBLE ...OR...
J-JASON--LOOK! A STRANGER--!
WH-WHAT'S SOMEONE FROM THE OUTSIDE WORLD D-DOING HERE?
I DON'T KNOW, MAYOR MUTTERIDGE--BUT I INTEND TO FIND OUT!
GEE, MA--HE'S A BIG 'UN, ISN'T HE?
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

DOIN' HERE? I'LL TELL YA WHAT HE'S DOIN' HERE, JASON -- HE'S COMMITTIN' MURDER!
G'WAN--LOOK FER YOURSELF! THAT MONSTER KILLED YER PAPPY!
MY FATHER? NO -- HE COULDN'T HAVE--!

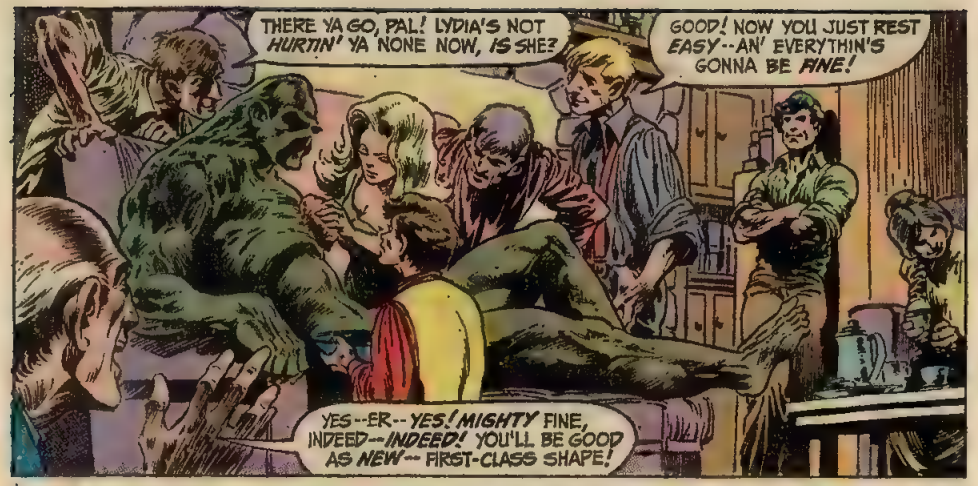

MURDER, YOU SAY? THEN CHECK THE BODY!
MY FATHER WASN'T KILLED BY THE STRANGER--
--HE WAS CLAWED TO DEATH -- BY A BEAR!


W-WHY--YES, HE WAS--HE WAS INDEED, BY GEORGE!
YOU SEE? THE STRANGER'S INNOCENT! YOU ATTACKED HIM FOR NO REASON!

C'MON NOW, HECTOR-- ADMIT YOUR MISTAKE!
TELL THE STRANGER YOU DIDN'T MEAN TO CALL HIM A MONSTER!
SHUCKS, STRANGER --I'M DOWNRIGHT SORRY IF I OFFENDED YA!

WHAT KIND OF TOWN ... IS THIS ...? THEY'RE ALL ... CRAZIER THAN ...
OH, MA--LOOK! THE BEAR CLAWED THE STRANGER, TOO! HE'S HURT!
SO HE IS! HOW TERRIBLE!

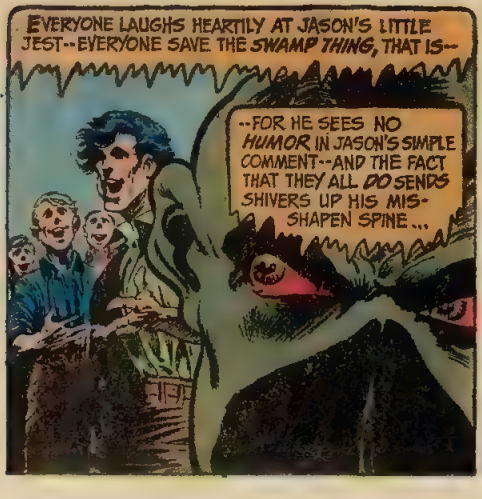
YOU'D BETTER COME HOME WITH US, STRANGER --AND LET LYDIA TEND TO THOSE CUTS!
WITH PLEASURE...! CRAZY OR NOT ... THAT'S THE FIRST INVITATION... I'VE RECEIVED IN... A LONG TIME...!
He awakens...
10


THERE YA GO, PAL! LYDIA'S NOT HURTIN' YA NONE NOW, IS SHE?
GOOD! NOW YOU JUST REST EASY--AN' EVERYTHIN'S GONNA BE FINE!
YES--ER--YES! MIGHTY FINE, INDEED--INDEED! YOU'LL BE GOOD AS NEW--FIRST-CLASS SHAPE!

AFTER ALL, WE--ER--WOULDN'T WANT TO LOSE THE FIRST VISITOR THIS TOWN'S HAD IN YEARS NOW--ER--WOULD WE?

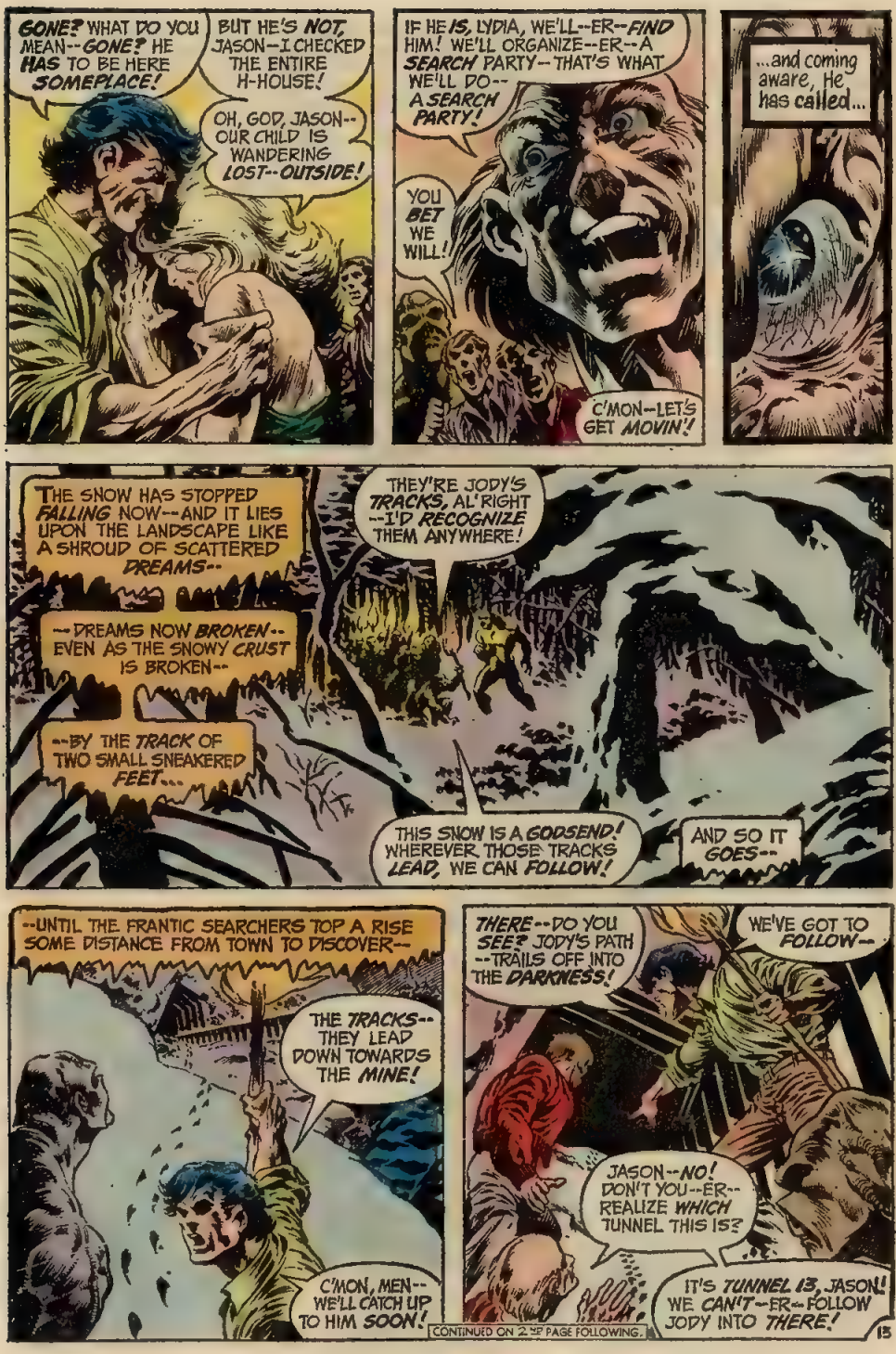
THE MAYOR'S RIGHT, FRIEND--YOU JUST RELAX AND RECUPERATE! WE ALL WANT YOU BACK IN PERFECT CONDITION--ABSOLUTELY PERFECT CONDITION--HA HA HA HA!

...and awakening, He becomes aware...


EVERYONE LAUGHS HEARTILY AT JASON'S LITTLE JEST--EVERYONE SAVE THE SWAMP THING, THAT IS--
--FOR HE SEES NO HUMOR IN JASON'S SIMPLE COMMENT--AND THE FACT THAT THEY ALL DO SENDS SHIVERS UP HIS MIS-SHAPEN SPINE...

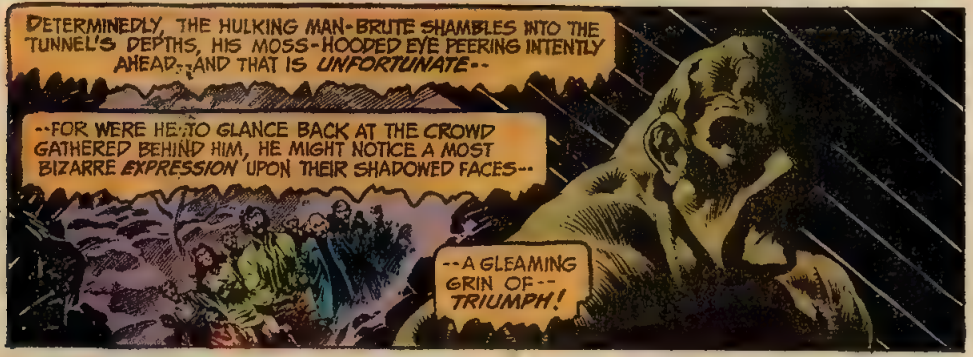
THE LAUGHTER FADES QUICKLY--BUT THE AIR OF MERRIMENT DOES NOT--
THE CONVIVIAL CHATTER DRONES ON--
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING

--THE BANAL BANTER THAT IS THE LIFE-BLOOD OF ANY PARTY FILLS THE ROOM--
--AND, AS IS ALSO TRUE OF THE AVERAGE PARTY, NOBODY NOTICES THE SILENT, STIFF-LIMBED DEPARTURE OF ONE OF ITS SMALLER GUESTS--
--NOBODY NOTICES ANYTHING, IN FACT--
--FOR, THOUGH THE MUNDANE CONVERSATION HAS NOT FLAGGED, EVERYONE SEEMS SOMEHOW DISTRACTED NOW--
--AS IF SOME MUTUALLY UNPLEASANT THOUGHT HAS TAKEN NEST IN THE BACK OF THEIR MINDS--
--AND ALTHOUGH THE BEWILDERED MAN-MONSTER SENSES THE UN-EASINESS THAT GNAWS AT THE GATHERED THRONG, THEY DO THEIR BEST TO CONCEAL IT--
--UNTIL IT CAN BE HIDDEN NO LONGER...
EEEIIIEEEEE
LYDIA? GOOD LORD, WOMAN-- WHAT IS IT?
JASON--IT'S JODY!
OUR SON IS--GONE!


GONE? WHAT DO YOU MEAN--GONE? HE HAS TO BE HERE SOMEPLACE!
BUT HE'S NOT, JASON--I CHECKED THE ENTIRE H-HOUSE!
OH, GOD, JASON--OUR CHILD IS WANDERING LOST--OUTSIDE!
IF HE IS, LYDIA, WE'LL--ER--FIND HIM! WE'LL ORGANIZE--ER--A SEARCH PARTY--THAT'S WHAT WE'LL DO--A SEARCH PARTY!
YOU BET WE WILL!
C'MON--LET'S GET MOVIN'!
...and coming aware, He has called...
THE SNOW HAS STOPPED FALLING NOW--AND IT LIES UPON THE LANDSCAPE LIKE A SHROUD OF SCATTERED DREAMS--
--DREAMS NOW BROKEN--EVEN AS THE SNOWY CRUST IS BROKEN--
--BY THE TRACK OF TWO SMALL SNEAKERED FEET...
THEY'RE JODY'S TRACKS, AL'RIGHT --I'D RECOGNIZE THEM ANYWHERE!
THIS SNOW IS A GODSEND! WHEREVER THOSE TRACKS LEAD, WE CAN FOLLOW!
AND SO IT GOES--
--UNTIL THE FRANTIC SEARCHERS TOP A RISE SOME DISTANCE FROM TOWN TO DISCOVER--
THE TRACKS--THEY LEAD DOWN TOWARDS THE MINE!
C'MON, MEN--WE'LL CATCH UP TO HIM SOON!
THERE--DO YOU SEE? JODY'S PATH --TRAILS OFF INTO THE DARKNESS!
WE'VE GOT TO FOLLOW--
JASON--NO! DON'T YOU--ER--REALIZE WHICH TUNNEL THIS IS?
IT'S TUNNEL 13, JASON! WE CAN'T--ER--FOLLOW JODY INTO THERE!
CONTINUED ON 2 UP PAGE FOLLOWING.

MAYBE YOU CAN'T, MUTTERIDGE--BUT HE'S MY SON!
I'M GOING IN THERE ALONE IF I HAVE...
EH?
NO, JASON... YOU'RE NOT ...GOING IN THERE...!

I AM GOING IN THERE... IN YOUR PLACE...! I OWE YOU... THAT MUCH AT LEAST...!
YOU JUST STAY HERE ...AND WAIT...! I'LL BE BACK... WITH YOUR SON...
...OR I WON'T BE BACK... AT ALL...!


DETERMINEDLY, THE HULKING MAN-BRUTE SHAMBLES INTO THE TUNNEL'S DEPTHS, HIS MOSS-HOODED EYE PEERING INTENTLY AHEAD--AND THAT IS UNFORTUNATE--
--FOR WERE HE TO GLANCE BACK AT THE CROWD GATHERED BEHIND HIM, HE MIGHT NOTICE A MOST BIZARRE EXPRESSION UPON THEIR SHADOWED FACES--
--A GLEAMING GRIN OF-- TRIUMPH!

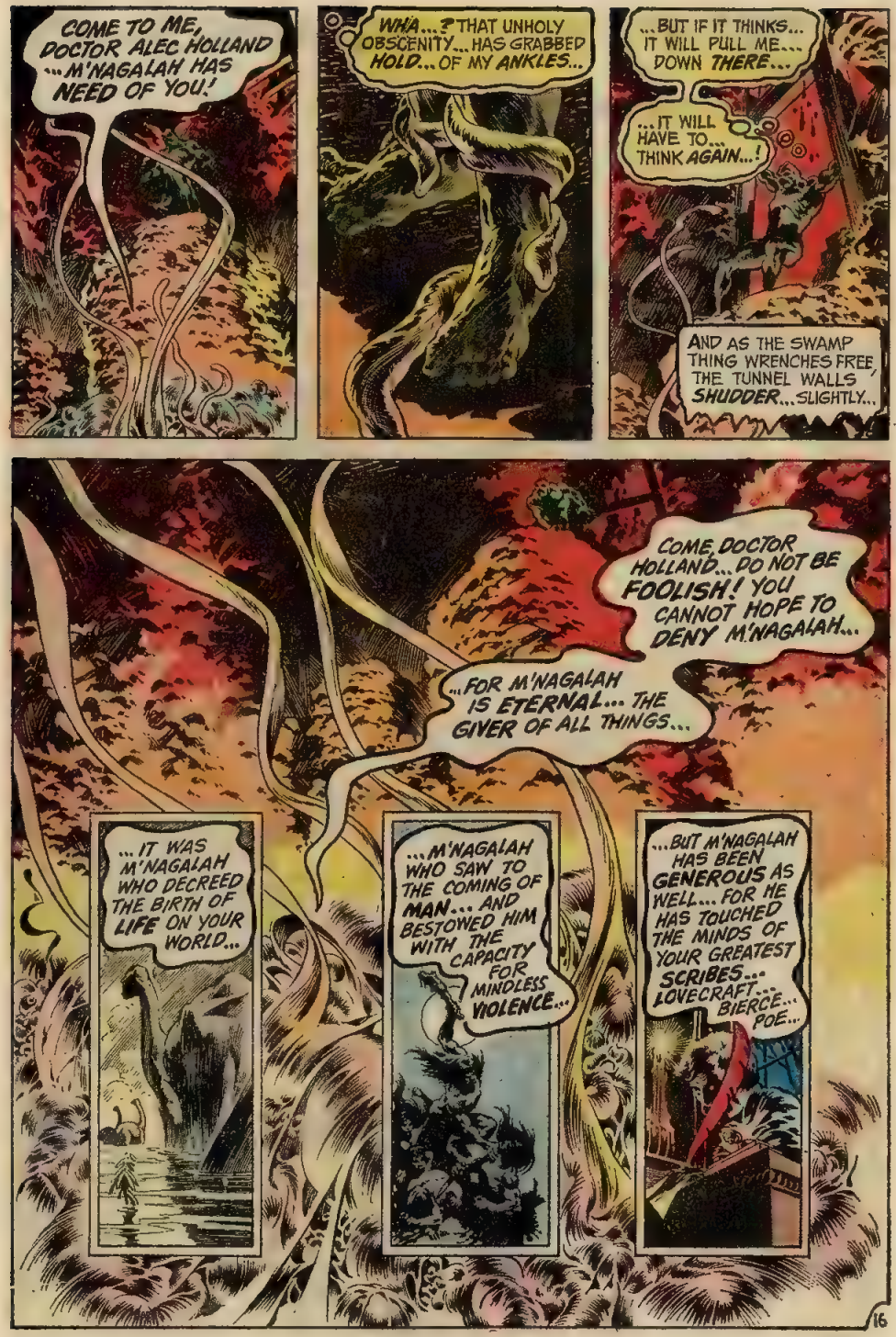
BUT THE SWAMP THING DOES NOT GLANCE BACK-- AND SO HE LUMBERS ON--

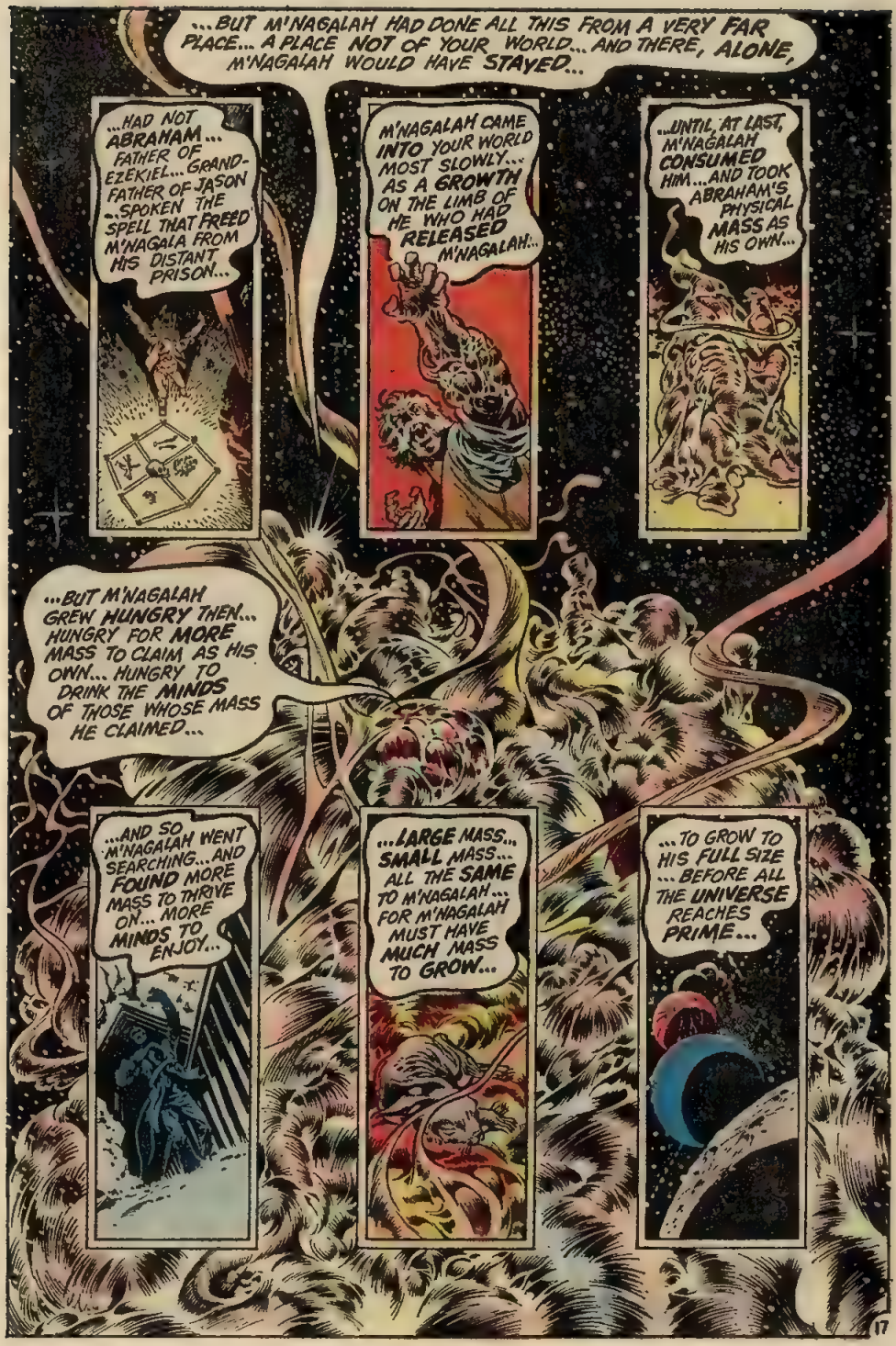
--FOLLOWING THE TRACKS OF A RUSTY ORE CAR DEEP INTO THE... CLUTCHING DARKNESS

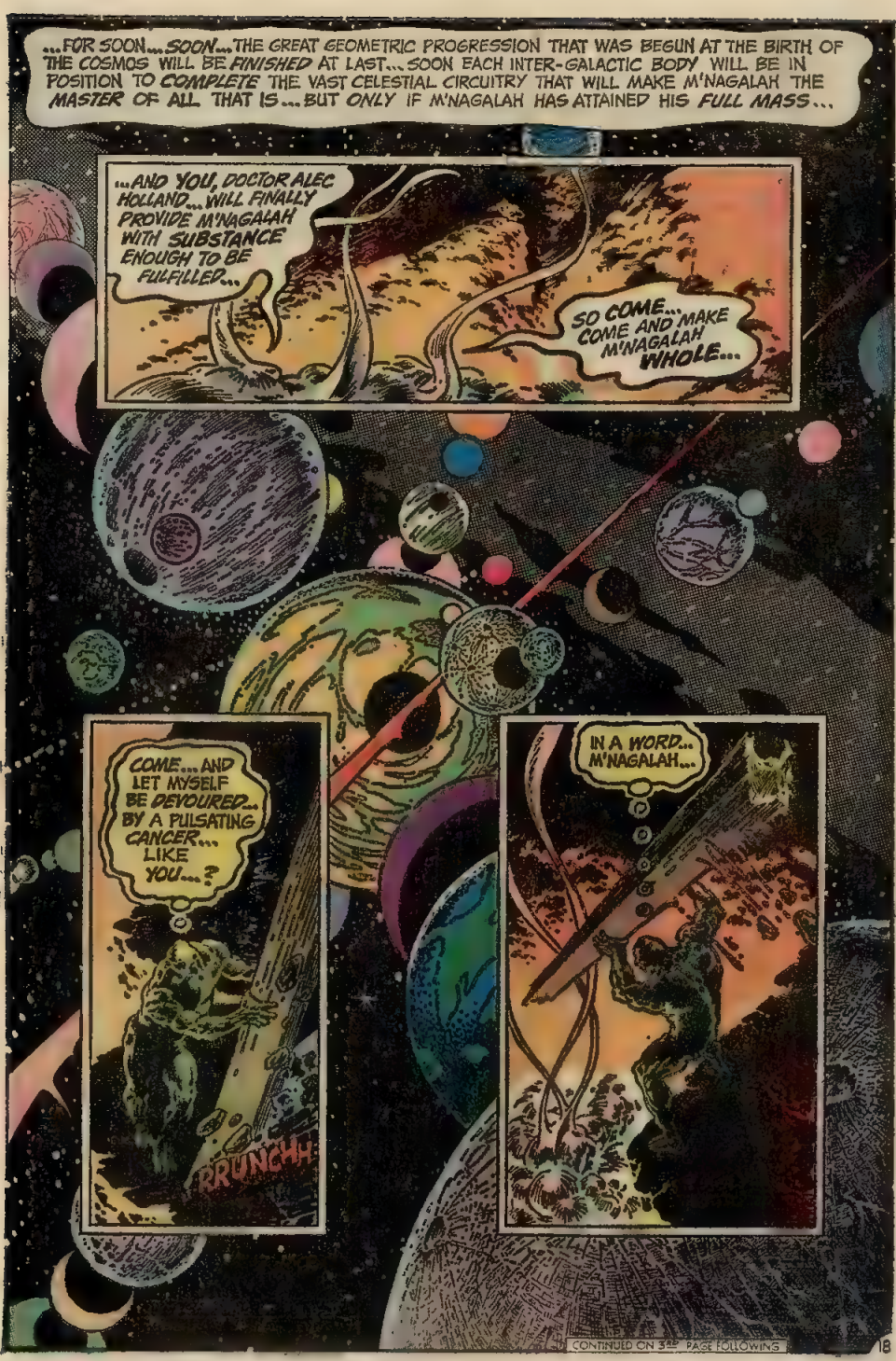
--UNTIL THE TRACKS ABRUPTLY END-- AND THERE IS NOTHING FOR HIM TO FOLLOW--
--SAVE AN INNER VOICE THAT DRAWS HIM ONWARD--

--ONWARD INTO THE TUNNEL'S DARKEST RECESSES --AND THE RIM OF AN UNNATURAL PIT--
...for He has called and, at last, He has been answered...

...and having been answered, He is satisfied... most satisfied...
...for He is M'Nagalah... and he lives...
... Dear, dear God in Heaven... He LIVES!!!
WELCOME, YOU WHO WERE ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND...
...M'NAGALAH HAS BEEN... EXPECTING YOU!
...AND TO THE NAUSEATED SWAMP THING'S MIND, HE SPEAKS— IN A VOICE THAT IS LIKE A GUTTURAL WHISPER FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE, LIKE A FLESH-CURDLING HISSING OUT OF HELL...
15


COME TO ME, DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND ...M'NAGALAH HAS NEED OF YOU!
WHA...? THAT UNHOLY OBSCENITY... HAS GRABBED HOLD... OF MY ANKLES...
...BUT IF IT THINKS... IT WILL PULL ME... DOWN THERE...
...IT WILL HAVE TO... THINK AGAIN...!
AND AS THE SWAMP THING WRENCHES FREE, THE TUNNEL WALLS SHUDDER... SLIGHTLY...
COME, DOCTOR HOLLAND... DO NOT BE FOOLISH! YOU CANNOT HOPE TO DENY M'NAGALAH...
...FOR M'NAGALAH IS ETERNAL... THE GIVER OF ALL THINGS...
...IT WAS M'NAGALAH WHO DECREED THE BIRTH OF LIFE ON YOUR WORLD...
...M'NAGALAH WHO SAW TO THE COMING OF MAN... AND BESTOWED HIM WITH THE CAPACITY FOR MINDLESS VIOLENCE...
...BUT M'NAGALAH HAS BEEN GENEROUS AS WELL... FOR HE HAS TOUCHED THE MINDS OF YOUR GREATEST SCRIBES... LOVECRAFT... BIERCE... POE...


...BUT M'NAGALAH HAD DONE ALL THIS FROM A VERY FAR PLACE... A PLACE NOT OF YOUR WORLD... AND THERE, ALONE, M'NAGALAH WOULD HAVE STAYED...
...HAD NOT ABRAHAM... FATHER OF EZEKIEL... GRANDFATHER OF JASON ...SPOKEN THE SPELL THAT FREED M'NAGALA FROM HIS DISTANT PRISON...
M'NAGALAH CAME INTO YOUR WORLD MOST SLOWLY... AS A GROWTH ON THE LIMB OF HE WHO HAD RELEASED M'NAGALAH...
...UNTIL, AT LAST, M'NAGALAH CONSUMED HIM... AND TOOK ABRAHAM'S PHYSICAL MASS AS HIS OWN...
...BUT M'NAGALAH GREW HUNGRY THEN... HUNGRY FOR MORE MASS TO CLAIM AS HIS OWN... HUNGRY TO DRINK THE MINDS OF THOSE WHOSE MASS HE CLAIMED...
...AND SO M'NAGALAH WENT SEARCHING... AND FOUND MORE MASS TO THRIVE ON... MORE MINDS TO ENJOY...
...LARGE MASS... SMALL MASS... ALL THE SAME TO M'NAGALAH... FOR M'NAGALAH MUST HAVE MUCH MASS TO GROW...
...TO GROW TO HIS FULL SIZE ...BEFORE ALL THE UNIVERSE REACHES PRIME...


...FOR SOON... SOON... THE GREAT GEOMETRIC PROGRESSION THAT WAS BEGUN AT THE BIRTH OF THE COSMOS WILL BE FINISHED AT LAST... SOON EACH INTER-GALACTIC BODY WILL BE IN POSITION TO COMPLETE THE VAST CELESTIAL CIRCUITRY THAT WILL MAKE M'NAGALAH THE MASTER OF ALL THAT IS... BUT ONLY IF M'NAGALAH HAS ATTAINED HIS FULL MASS...
...AND YOU, DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND... WILL FINALLY PROVIDE M'NAGALAH WITH SUBSTANCE ENOUGH TO BE FULFILLED...
SO COME... COME AND MAKE M'NAGALAH WHOLE...
COME... AND LET MYSELF BE DEVOURED... BY A PULSATING CANCER... LIKE YOU...?
RRUNCHH
IN A WORD... M'NAGALAH...
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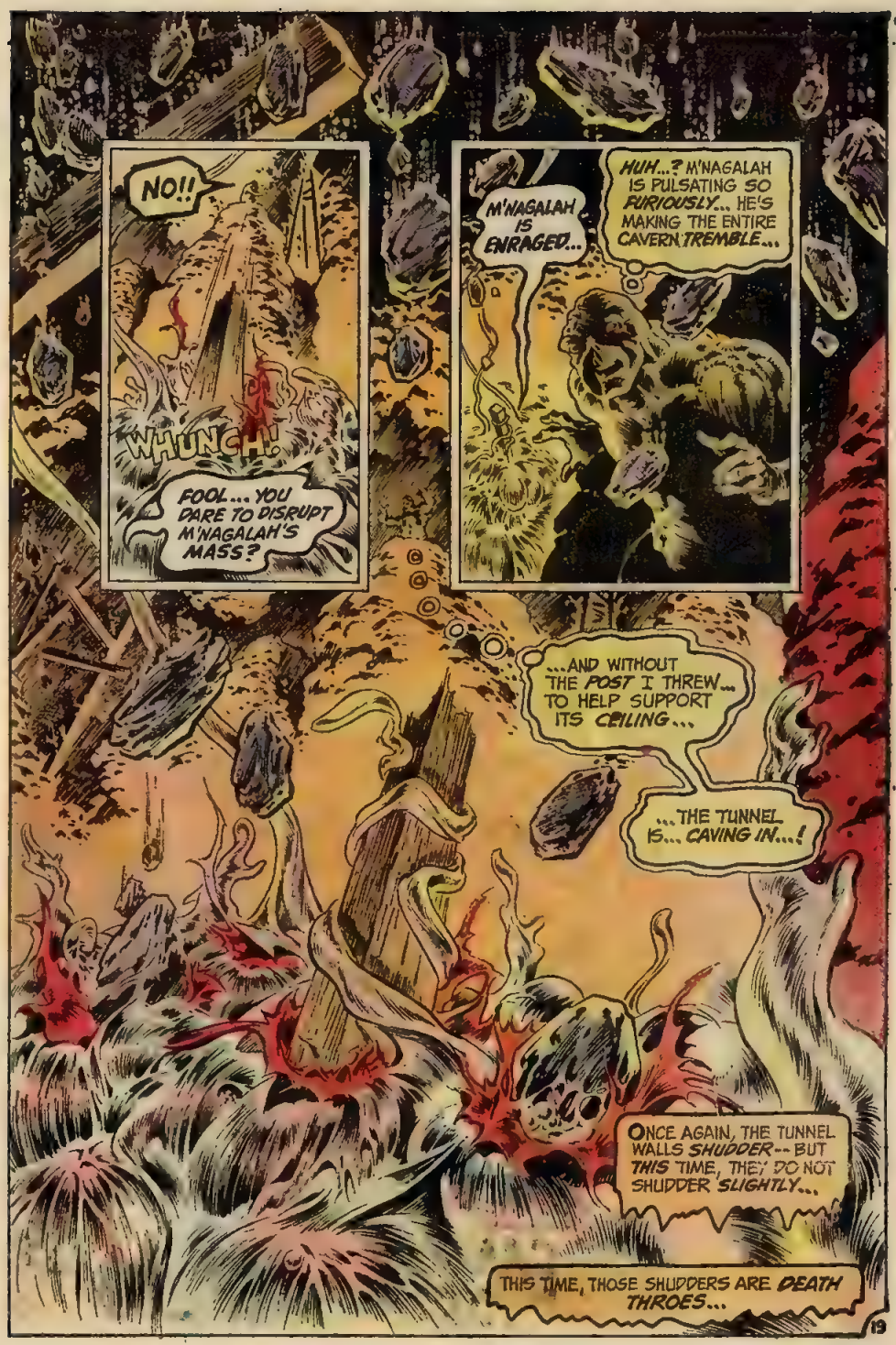
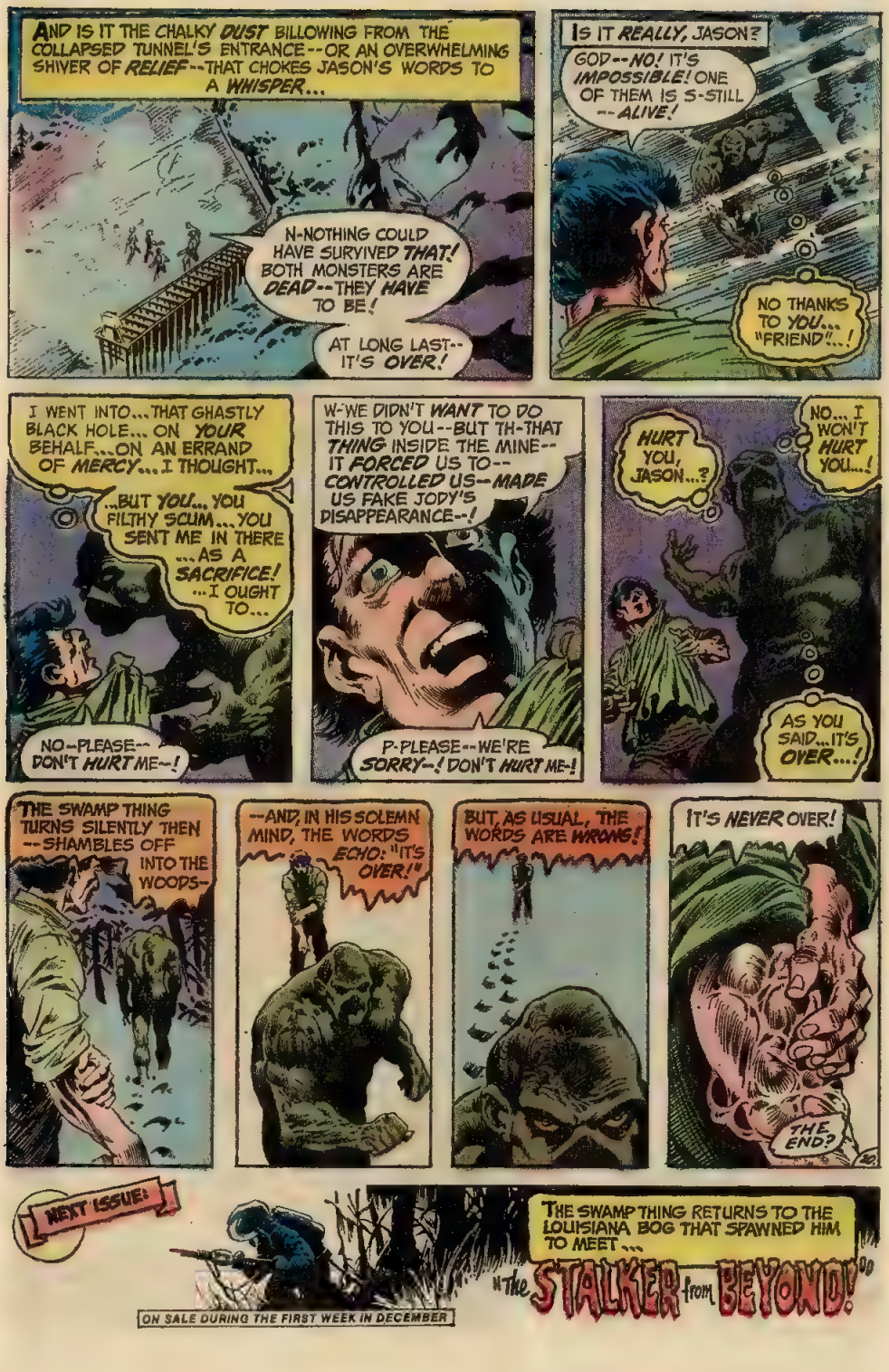

NO!!
WHUNCH!
FOOL... YOU DARE TO DISRUPT M'NAGALAH'S MASS?
M'NAGALAH IS ENRAGED...
HUH...? M'NAGALAH IS PULSATING SO FURIOUSLY... HE'S MAKING THE ENTIRE CAVERN TREMBLE...
...AND WITHOUT THE POST I THREW... TO HELP SUPPORT ITS CEILING...
...THE TUNNEL IS... CAVING IN...!
ONCE AGAIN, THE TUNNEL WALLS SHUDDER -- BUT THIS TIME, THEY DO NOT SHUDDER SLIGHTLY...
THIS TIME, THOSE SHUDDERS ARE DEATH THROES...


AND IS IT THE CHALKY DUST BILLOWING FROM THE COLLAPSED TUNNEL'S ENTRANCE--OR AN OVERWHELMING SHIVER OF RELIEF--THAT CHOKES JASON'S WORDS TO A WHISPER...
N-NOTHING COULD HAVE SURVIVED THAT! BOTH MONSTERS ARE DEAD--THEY HAVE TO BE!
AT LONG LAST--IT'S OVER!
IS IT REALLY, JASON?
GOD--NO! IT'S IMPOSSIBLE! ONE OF THEM IS S-STILL --ALIVE!
NO THANKS TO YOU... "FRIEND"...!
I WENT INTO...THAT GHASTLY BLACK HOLE... ON YOUR BEHALF...ON AN ERRAND OF MERCY... I THOUGHT...
...BUT YOU... YOU FILTHY SCUM... YOU SENT ME IN THERE ...AS A SACRIFICE! ...I OUGHT TO...
NO--PLEASE-- DON'T HURT ME--!
W-WE DIDN'T WANT TO DO THIS TO YOU--BUT TH-THAT THING INSIDE THE MINE-- IT FORCED US TO-- CONTROLLED US--MADE US FAKE JODY'S DISAPPEARANCE--!
P-PLEASE--WE'RE SORRY--! DON'T HURT ME-!
HURT YOU, JASON...?
NO... I WON'T HURT YOU...!
AS YOU SAID...IT'S OVER...!
THE SWAMP THING TURNS SILENTLY THEN --SHAMBLES OFF INTO THE WOODS--
--AND, IN HIS SOLEMN MIND, THE WORDS ECHO: "IT'S OVER!"
BUT, AS USUAL, THE WORDS ARE WRONG!
IT'S NEVER OVER!
THE END?
NEXT ISSUE!
THE SWAMP THING RETURNS TO THE LOUISIANA BOG THAT SPAWNED HIM TO MEET ....
"The STALKER from BEYOND!"
ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN DECEMBER

THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
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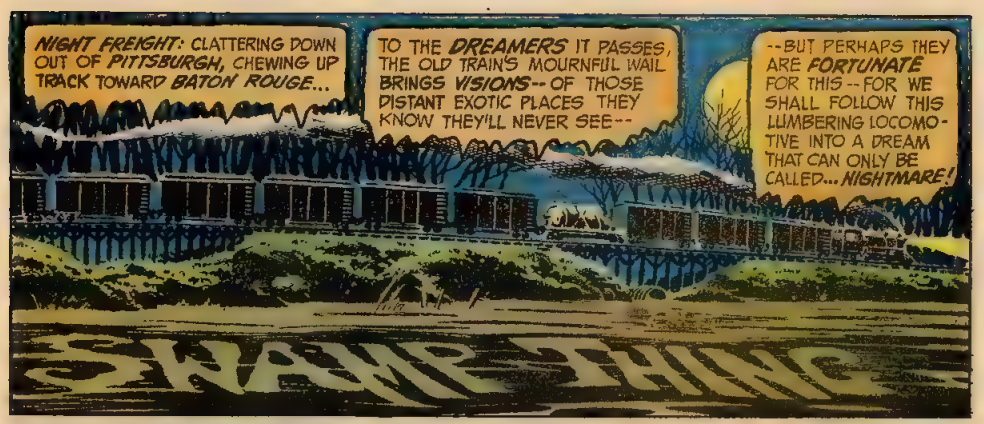
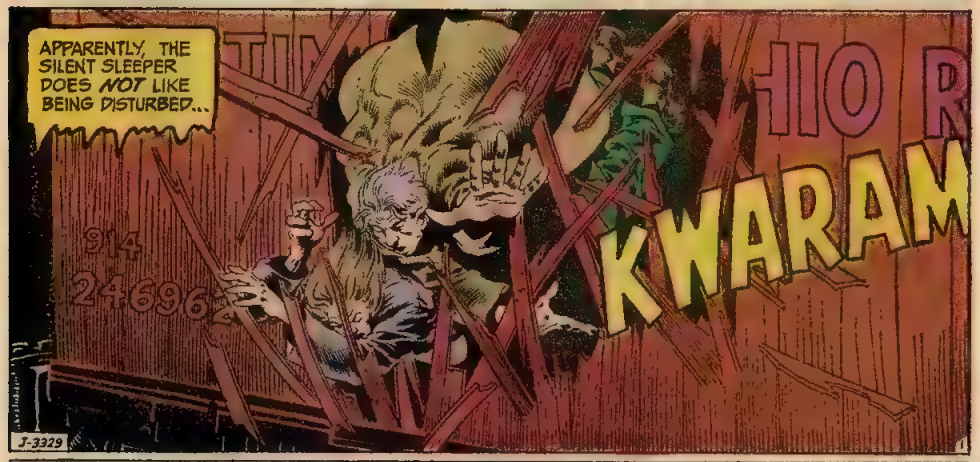
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SWAMP THING
BERNIE WRIGHTSON
DF-3372


NIGHT FREIGHT: CLATTERING DOWN OUT OF PITTSBURGH, CHEWING UP TRACK TOWARD BATON ROUGE...
TO THE DREAMERS IT PASSES, THE OLD TRAIN'S MOURNFUL WAIL BRINGS VISIONS--OF THOSE DISTANT EXOTIC PLACES THEY KNOW THEY'LL NEVER SEE--
--BUT PERHAPS THEY ARE FORTUNATE FOR THIS--FOR WE SHALL FOLLOW THIS LUMBERING LOCOMOTIVE INTO A DREAM THAT CAN ONLY BE CALLED... NIGHTMARE!
SWAMP THING



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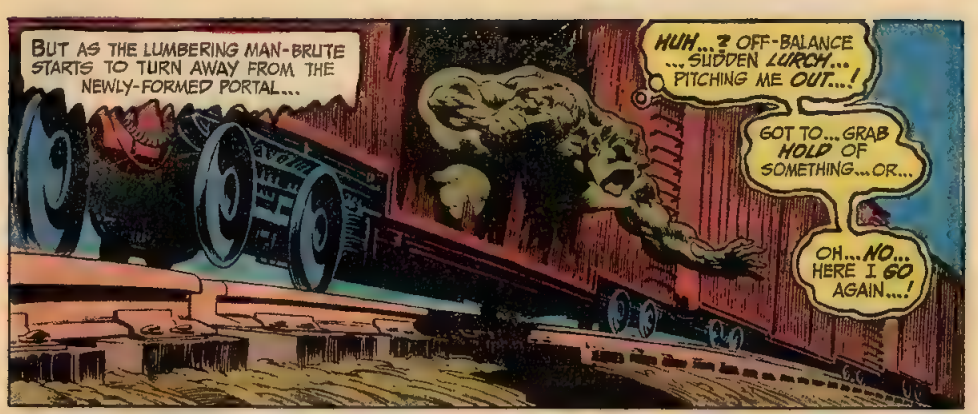
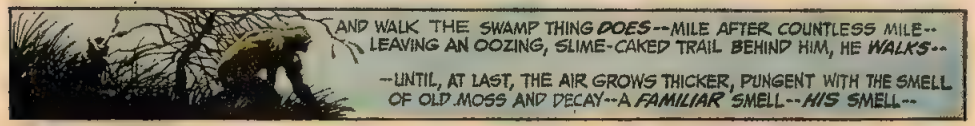
THERE IS MOST DEFINITELY A LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS--
--BUT RIGHT NOW MIGHT NOT BE THE PROPER TIME TO GO INTO IT...
THE EMBANKMENT IS...SOFT...! FALL SHOULDN'T LEAVE THOSE TWO... WOULD-BE MUGGERS WITH MORE... THAN A FEW BRUISES....!
MAYBE IN THE FUTURE... THEY'LL KNOW ENOUGH TO... LET SLEEPING SWAMP THINGS LIE...!
THE STALKER FROM BEYOND!
A LEN WEIN - BERNI WRIGHTSON - JOE ORLANDO (writer) (artist) (editor) PRESENTATION


BUT AS THE LUMBERING MAN-BRUTE STARTS TO TURN AWAY FROM THE NEWLY-FORMED PORTAL...
HUH...? OFF-BALANCE ...SUDDEN LURCH... PITCHING ME OUT...!
GOT TO... GRAB HOLD OF SOMETHING... OR...
OH... NO... HERE I GO AGAIN...!

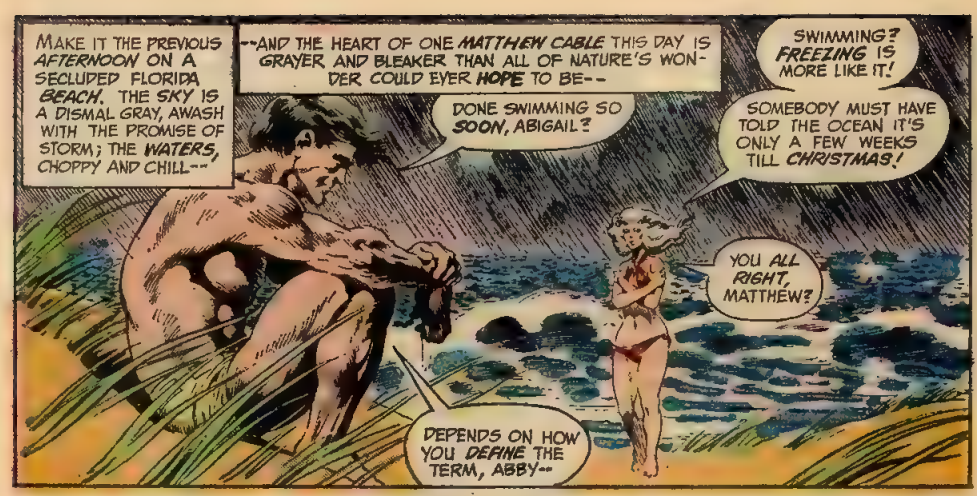
UUNNFF... EMBANKMENT REALLY IS SOFT...
...TOO SOFT FOR ME... TO REGAIN MY FOOTING...

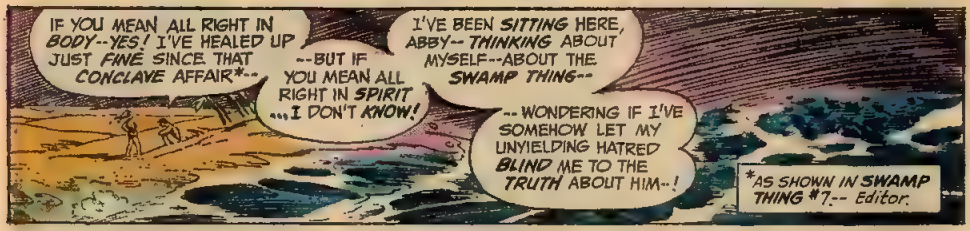
...BUT I HAVE TO GET... BACK UP TO THAT TRAIN AGAIN ...BEFORE...

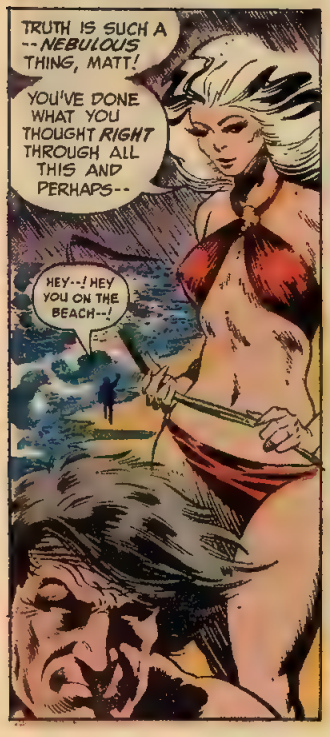
TOO LATE...!
NOT A CHANCE OF... CATCHING THAT OLD FREIGHT NOW...!
GUESS I'LL HAVE TO START ...WALKING...!


AND WALK THE SWAMP THING DOES--MILE AFTER COUNTLESS MILE--LEAVING AN OOZING, SLIME-CAKED TRAIL BEHIND HIM, HE WALKS--
--UNTIL, AT LAST, THE AIR GROWS THICKER, PUNGENT WITH THE SMELL OF OLD MOSS AND DECAY--A FAMILIAR SMELL--HIS SMELL--

--AND HE WHO WAS ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND KNOWS HE HAS COME HOME--
--TO THE STAGNANT SWAMP THAT SPAWNED HIM!


MAKE IT THE PREVIOUS AFTERNOON ON A SECLUDED FLORIDA BEACH. THE SKY IS A DISMAL GRAY, AWASH WITH THE PROMISE OF STORM; THE WATERS, CHOPPY AND CHILL--
--AND THE HEART OF ONE MATTHEW CABLE THIS DAY IS GRAYER AND BLEAKER THAN ALL OF NATURE'S WONDER COULD EVER HOPE TO BE--
DONE SWIMMING SO SOON, ABIGAIL?
SWIMMING? FREEZING IS MORE LIKE IT!
SOMEBODY MUST HAVE TOLD THE OCEAN IT'S ONLY A FEW WEEKS TILL CHRISTMAS!
YOU ALL RIGHT, MATTHEW?
DEPENDS ON HOW YOU DEFINE THE TERM, ABBY--


IF YOU MEAN ALL RIGHT IN BODY--YES! I'VE HEALED UP JUST FINE SINCE THAT CONCLAVE AFFAIR*--
--BUT IF YOU MEAN ALL RIGHT IN SPIRIT ...I DON'T KNOW!
I'VE BEEN SITTING HERE, ABBY-- THINKING ABOUT MYSELF--ABOUT THE SWAMP THING--
--WONDERING IF I'VE SOMEHOW LET MY UNYIELDING HATRED BLIND ME TO THE TRUTH ABOUT HIM--!
*AS SHOWN IN SWAMP THING #7.-- Editor.


TRUTH IS SUCH A --NEBULOUS THING, MATT!
YOU'VE DONE WHAT YOU THOUGHT RIGHT THROUGH ALL THIS AND PERHAPS--
HEY--! HEY YOU ON THE BEACH--!

MATTHEW, SOMEONE'S COMING--
--AND FROM HIS ATTIRE, I'D SAY HE'S NOT INTERESTED IN SUN-BATHING!
OH NO--I RECOGNIZE THE EXPRESSION ON THAT FACE--!
I'LL LAY ODDS THE HOME OFFICE SENT HIM TO FETCH US BACK TO WASHINGTON!

MR. CABLE? MS. ARCANE? I'M SMITHERS! THE HOME OFFICE SENT ME!
I KNEW IT! I KNEW IT! SOMEBODY UPSTAIRS HATES ME!
HATE TO DO THIS ON YOUR VACATION-- BUT YOU'RE NEEDED BACK IN D.C.!

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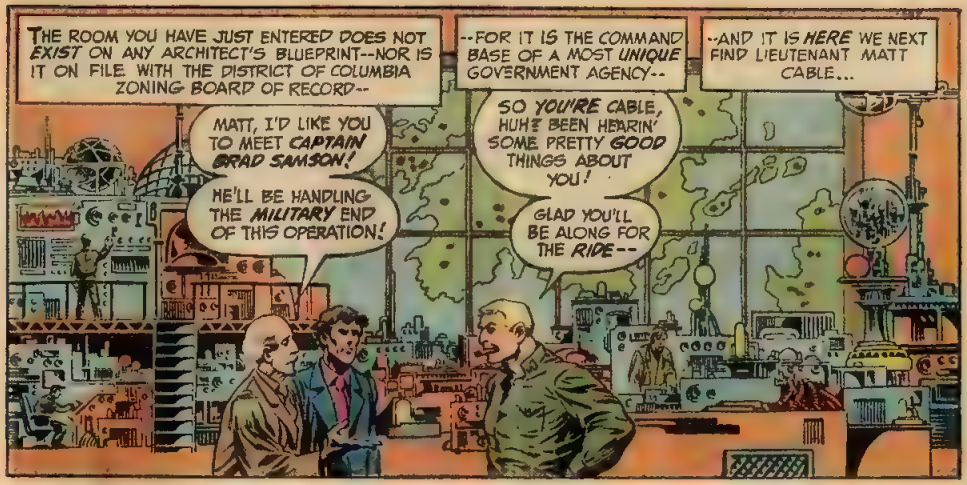
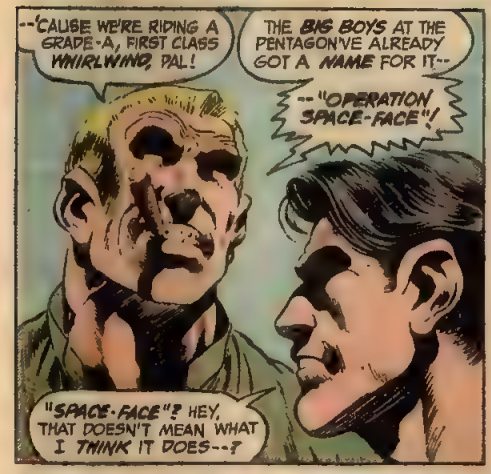
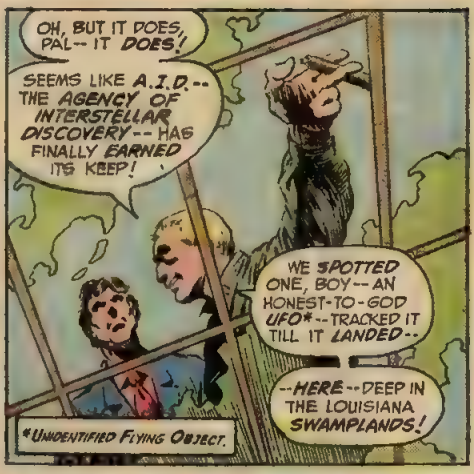
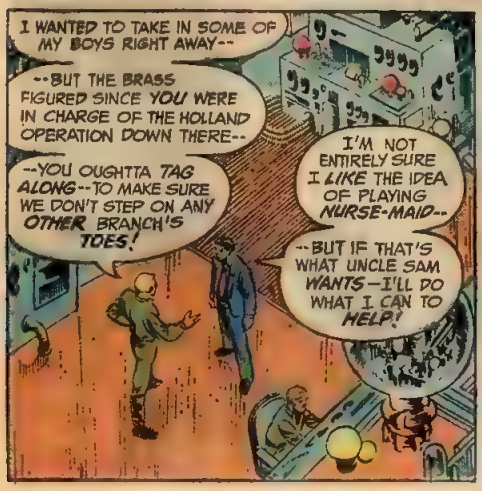

THE ROOM YOU HAVE JUST ENTERED DOES NOT EXIST ON ANY ARCHITECT'S BLUEPRINT--NOR IS IT ON FILE WITH THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA ZONING BOARD OF RECORD--
--FOR IT IS THE COMMAND BASE OF A MOST UNIQUE GOVERNMENT AGENCY--
--AND IT IS HERE WE NEXT FIND LIEUTENANT MATT CABLE...
MATT, I'D LIKE YOU TO MEET CAPTAIN BRAD SAMSON!
HE'LL BE HANDLING THE MILITARY END OF THIS OPERATION!
SO YOU'RE CABLE, HUH? BEEN HEARIN' SOME PRETTY GOOD THINGS ABOUT YOU!
GLAD YOU'LL BE ALONG FOR THE RIDE--


--'CAUSE WE'RE RIDING A GRADE-A, FIRST CLASS WHIRLWIND, PAL!
THE BIG BOYS AT THE PENTAGON'VE ALREADY GOT A NAME FOR IT--
--"OPERATION SPACE-FACE"!
"SPACE-FACE"? HEY, THAT DOESN'T MEAN WHAT I THINK IT DOES--?


OH, BUT IT DOES, PAL-- IT DOES!
SEEMS LIKE A.I.D.-- THE AGENCY OF INTERSTELLAR DISCOVERY-- HAS FINALLY EARNED ITS KEEP!
WE SPOTTED ONE, BOY-- AN HONEST-TO-GOD UFO*--TRACKED IT TILL IT LANDED--
--HERE--DEEP IN THE LOUISIANA SWAMPLANDS!
*UNIDENTIFIED FLYING OBJECT.


I WANTED TO TAKE IN SOME OF MY BOYS RIGHT AWAY--
--BUT THE BRASS FIGURED SINCE YOU WERE IN CHARGE OF THE HOLLAND OPERATION DOWN THERE--
--YOU OUGHTTA TAG ALONG--TO MAKE SURE WE DON'T STEP ON ANY OTHER BRANCH'S TOES!
I'M NOT ENTIRELY SURE I LIKE THE IDEA OF PLAYING NURSE-MAID--
--BUT IF THAT'S WHAT UNCLE SAM WANTS--I'LL DO WHAT I CAN TO HELP!

GOOD! YOU DO THAT, PAL!
JUST TRY TO KEEP OUT OF THE WAY-- AND WE'LL GET ALONG JUST FINE!
I DON'T THINK I'M GOING TO LIKE THIS MAN!

AND HOURS LATER, IN THOSE LOUISIANA SWAMPLANDS, A CERTAIN MOSSY MAN-BRUTE SHAMBLES HESITANTLY TOWARDS THE SINGLE WOODEN STRUCTURE THAT RISES FROM THE BOG...
THERE IT IS...!
THE STORY OF THE SWAMP THING... BEGAN IN THAT OLD CONVERTED BARN...!
ALL BOARDED UP NOW... MUST HAVE TAKEN ALMOST EVERYTHING... WITH THEM WHEN THEY CLOSED DOWN...
BUT IF THEY LEFT ANYTHING BEHIND...
...ANYTHING AT ALL...
...I'LL HAVE A STARTING PLACE... TO BEGIN THE WORK OF... CURING MY...
...LORD..!
A SPACECRAFT... SURELY NEVER DESIGNED BY... ANY ASTROPHYSICIST OF THIS EARTH...!
IT'S BANGED UP PRETTY BADLY... ITS PILOT MUST HAVE BROUGHT IT... INTO THE HAVEN OF THIS OLD BARN... FOR REPAIRS...!
WELL... I SUPPOSE THAT'S HIS BUSINESS...!
AS LONG AS HE DOESN'T INTERFERE... WITH MY WORK, HE CAN...
OH, GOD ... NO...!
SOME EQUIPMENT WAS LEFT BEHIND... BUT IT'S BEEN DISMANTLED...
...ITS COMPONENTS USED... TO REPAIR THAT BLASTED SHIP...!
I'M FINISHED... MY LAST HOPE TO DISCOVER A CURE ... RUINED...!
IF I COULD GET MY HANDS... ON THE ONE RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS, I'D...
HUH?

LACKING ANY CERTAIN KNOWLEDGE OF ITS PROPER GENDER, WE WILL CALL THIS CREATURE "IT"--
--NOR WILL WE FEEL IT ANY INSULT TO THE CREATURE'S OBVIOUS INTELLIGENCE FOR DOING SO--
--FOR IT IS EQUALLY FRUSTRATED IN ATTEMPTING TO DETERMINE THE IDENTITY OF THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MONSTROSITY WE HAVE COME TO KNOW SO WELL--
--BUT THE SWAMP THING, FORTUNATELY, IS AT NO SUCH UNCOMFORTABLE LOSS FOR WORDS..
DEAR LORD IN HEAVEN... LOOK AT THE SIZE...OF THAT CREATURE...!
IT STANDS AS TALL...AS I AM... AND IT MUST OUTWEIGH ME... BY SEVERAL HUNDRED POUNDS...!

FOR A MOMENT, THESE TWO AWESOME BEHEMOTHS STAND, EACH STUDYING THE OTHER, AS IF TRYING TO DECIDE HOW TO DEAL WITH THIS UNEXPECTED SITUATION...
THE ALIEN FROM SPACE PEERS AT THE SWAMP THING--AND WONDERS IF ALL WHO INHABIT THIS PRIMITIVE LITTLE WORLD ARE AS FRIGHTENING IN THEIR VISAGE--
--WHILE THE ALIEN FROM EARTH WONDERS, IN TURN, WHAT SORT OF HELL-SPAWNED MONSTER WOULD STEAL AWAY A MAN'S FINAL CHANCE TO REGAIN HIS HUMANITY--
--THEN, UNABLE TO CONTAIN HIS SEETHING RAGE ANY LONGER, THE SWAMP-BRUTE ACTS--
--AND HIS STAR-BORN OPPONENT REACTS WITH STAGGERING SPEED..
TZKAKK
HUH...? THAT RAY OF HIS... DISINTEGRATED MY HAND...
...BUT IF HE THINKS... THAT WILL KEEP ME... FROM MAKING HIM PAY...
...FOR WHAT HE'S DONE... TO MY HOPES... MY DREAMS...
...HE'S WRONG...
...DEAD WRONG...!
SKRUNCH!

WHAT I DID TO YOUR WEAPON, UGLY... IS ONLY A SAMPLE... OF WHAT I'M GOING TO DO... TO YOU...!
LITERALLY MAD WITH GRIEF, THE THING THAT WAS ONCE ALEC HOLLAND LUNGES FOR WHAT HE ASSUMES IS HIS OPPONENT'S THROAT--
--AND, HAVING NO OTHER RECOURSE, THE ALIEN LASHES OUT WITH AN ELEPHANTINE LIMB TO DEFEND ITSELF...
WHUD!
SKRACK
NO...! I'VE SHATTERED THE STARSHIP'S... SUPPORT POST...!
THEN, BEFORE THE MOSSY BRUTE CAN EVEN HOPE TO MOVE OUT OF THE WAY--
--THE STARSHIP--FALLS!
THWOOM!
THE REVERBERATIONS FADE AND THE OLD BARN FLOODS UP WITH SILENCE--
--WITH MUTE ACCUSATIONS THAT SWIRL ABOUT THE SWAMP THING'S SPRAWLED, UNMOVING BODY.--
--AND IF ONE COULD DESCERN EMOTION IN THE ALIEN'S IMMOBILE FACE, ONE MIGHT DISCOVER IT SUFFUSED WITH --REGRET!
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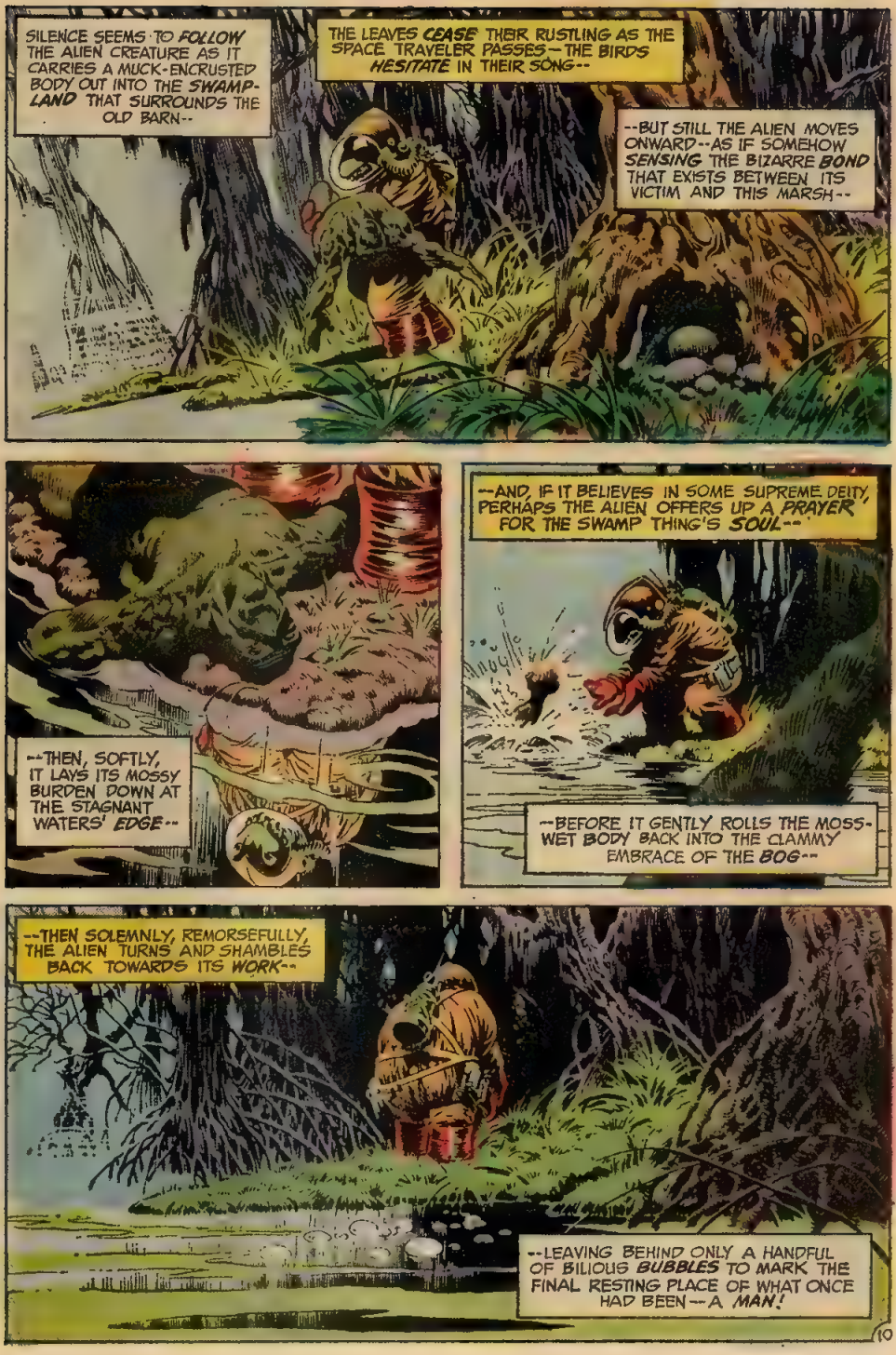
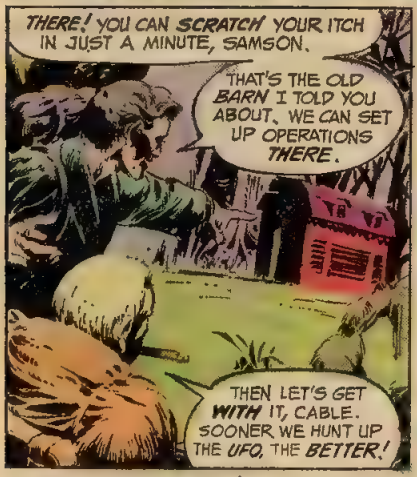
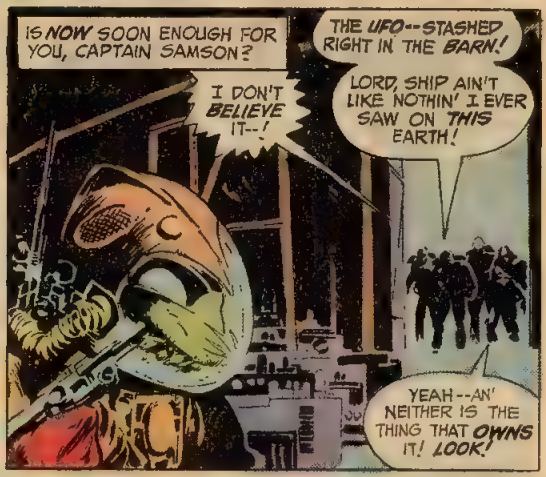

SILENCE SEEMS TO FOLLOW THE ALIEN CREATURE AS IT CARRIES A MUCK-ENCRUSTED BODY OUT INTO THE SWAMP-LAND THAT SURROUNDS THE OLD BARN--
THE LEAVES CEASE THEIR RUSTLING AS THE SPACE TRAVELER PASSES--THE BIRDS HESITATE IN THEIR SONG--
--BUT STILL THE ALIEN MOVES ONWARD--AS IF SOMEHOW SENSING THE BIZARRE BOND THAT EXISTS BETWEEN ITS VICTIM AND THIS MARSH--
--THEN, SOFTLY, IT LAYS ITS MOSSY BURDEN DOWN AT THE STAGNANT WATERS' EDGE--
--AND, IF IT BELIEVES IN SOME SUPREME DEITY, PERHAPS THE ALIEN OFFERS UP A PRAYER FOR THE SWAMP THING'S SOUL--
--BEFORE IT GENTLY ROLLS THE MOSS-WET BODY BACK INTO THE CLAMMY EMBRACE OF THE BOG--
--THEN SOLEMNLY, REMORSEFULLY, THE ALIEN TURNS AND SHAMBLES BACK TOWARDS ITS WORK--
--LEAVING BEHIND ONLY A HANDFUL OF BILIOUS BUBBLES TO MARK THE FINAL RESTING PLACE OF WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN--A MAN!

A SHORT WHILE LATER... A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY...
NOT MUCH FARTHER NOW, GENTS.
HOW MUCH IS "NOT MUCH," CABLE? I'M STARTIN' TO GET ITCHY.
KNOW WHAT YOU MEAN, CAPTAIN, SIR.
THESE SPECIAL SUITS THE LAB BOYS DESIGNED FOR US MIGHT BE GREAT FOR KEEPIN' OUT HEAT, BUT MOSQUITOES-- FORGET IT!


THERE! YOU CAN SCRATCH YOUR ITCH IN JUST A MINUTE, SAMSON.
THAT'S THE OLD BARN I TOLD YOU ABOUT. WE CAN SET UP OPERATIONS THERE.
THEN LET'S GET WITH IT, CABLE. SOONER WE HUNT UP THE UFO, THE BETTER!


IS NOW SOON ENOUGH FOR YOU, CAPTAIN SAMSON?
I DON'T BELIEVE IT--!
THE UFO--STASHED RIGHT IN THE BARN!
LORD, SHIP AIN'T LIKE NOTHIN' I EVER SAW ON THIS EARTH!
YEAH--AN' NEITHER IS THE THING THAT OWNS IT! LOOK!

WE'VE GOT TO FIGURE OUT HOW TO COMMUNICATE WITH IT-- DISCOVER WHERE IT COMES FROM-AND--
HEY-- THAT MONSTER'S PULLING A WEAPON ON US--
--BUT HE AIN'T GONNA WASTE ME!

HOLD YOUR FIRE, PVT. OPTIK- NOW!
THAT DEVICE LOOKED MORE LIKE A WELDING TORCH THAN A WEAPON.
BESIDES, OUR ORDERS ARE TO BRING BACK ANY-THING WE FIND OUT HERE-- ALIVE!
CHASH!
BLAM!
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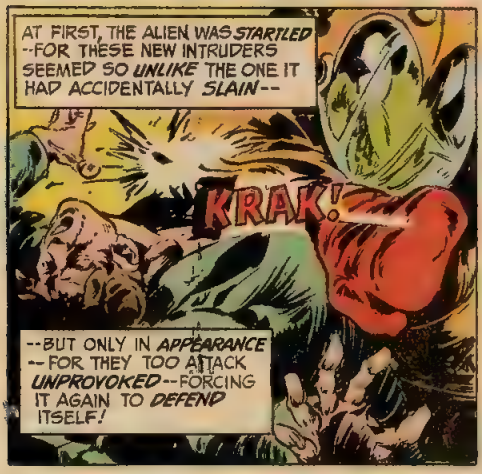
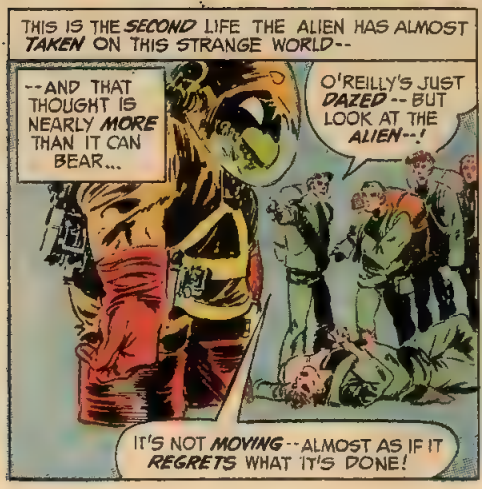
ALIVE, HUH? THAT'S EASY FOR THE BRASS BACK HOME TO SAY--THEY AIN'T STANDIN' HERE FACIN' THAT BRUTE!
BUT IF THAT'S THE WAY THEY WANT IT--

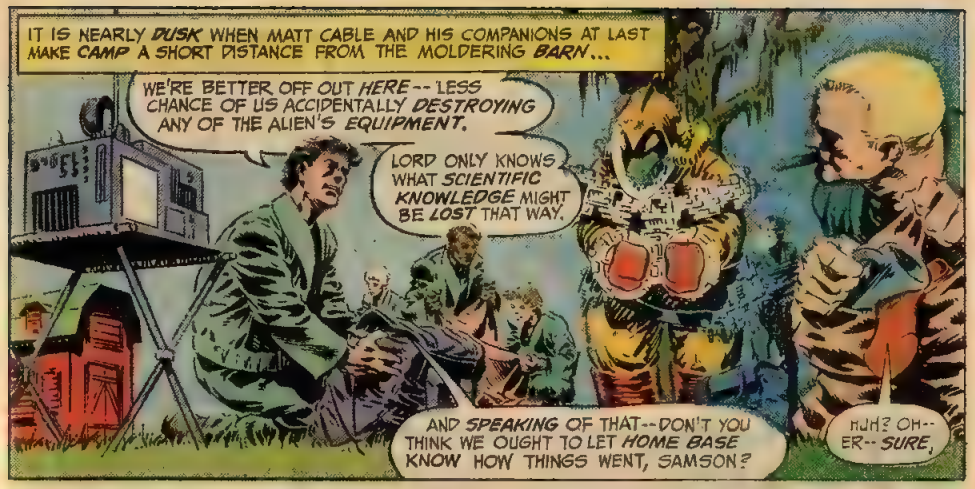
--THAT'S THE WAY THEY'LL GET IT! RIGHT, CAPTAIN, SIR?
O'REILLY, YOU FOOL--COME BACK HERE! I DIDN'T GIVE THE ORDER!


AT FIRST, THE ALIEN WAS STARTLED --FOR THESE NEW INTRUDERS SEEMED SO UNLIKE THE ONE IT HAD ACCIDENTALLY SLAIN--
KRAK!
--BUT ONLY IN APPEARANCE --FOR THEY TOO ATTACK UNPROVOKED--FORCING IT AGAIN TO DEFEND ITSELF!

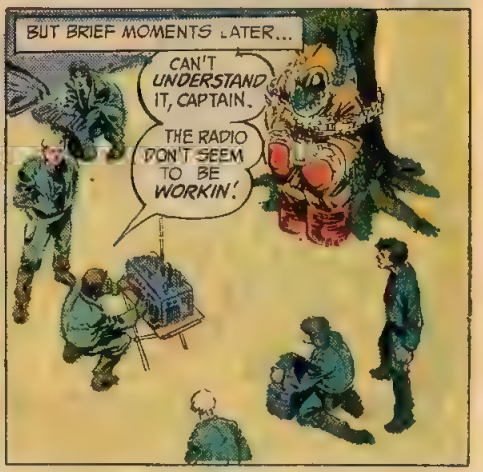
--AND IN SO DOING, TO LEARN A NEW THING--
--WHEN THESE SMALL CREATURES ARE STRUCK --THEY BREAK!
O'REILLY? SO HELP ME, IF THAT MONSTER HURT THE KID, I'LL...


THIS IS THE SECOND LIFE THE ALIEN HAS ALMOST TAKEN ON THIS STRANGE WORLD--
--AND THAT THOUGHT IS NEARLY MORE THAN IT CAN BEAR...
O'REILLY'S JUST DAZED -- BUT LOOK AT THE ALIEN--!
IT'S NOT MOVING--ALMOST AS IF IT REGRETS WHAT IT'S DONE!

YEAH? WELL, I DON'T REGRET WHAT I'M ABOUT TO DO--
DON'T REGRET IT ONE BIT!
CLAKT!
12

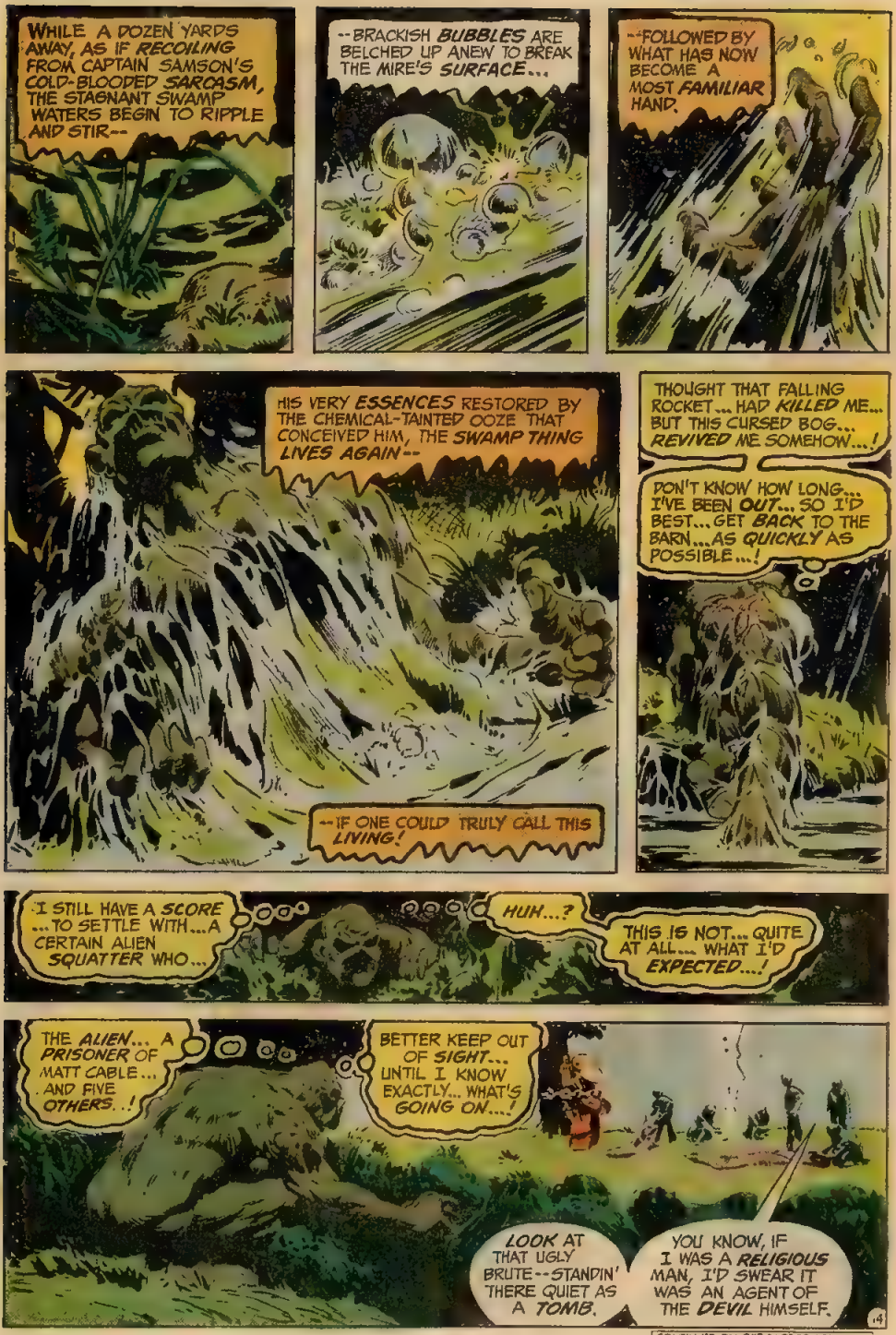

IT IS NEARLY DUSK WHEN MATT CABLE AND HIS COMPANIONS AT LAST MAKE CAMP A SHORT DISTANCE FROM THE MOLDERING BARN...
WE'RE BETTER OFF OUT HERE -- LESS CHANCE OF US ACCIDENTALLY DESTROYING ANY OF THE ALIEN'S EQUIPMENT.
LORD ONLY KNOWS WHAT SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE MIGHT BE LOST THAT WAY.
AND SPEAKING OF THAT--DON'T YOU THINK WE OUGHT TO LET HOME BASE KNOW HOW THINGS WENT, SAMSON?
HUH? OH--ER-- SURE,

TRUMBO, GET ON THE 'HORN' AND CONTACT THE BASE.
TELL 'EM TO SEND IN A CHOPPER IN THE MORNIN' FOR US AND OUR SPECIAL --ER-- PACKAGE.
YES SIR, CAPTAIN-- RIGHT AWAY.


BUT BRIEF MOMENTS LATER...
CAN'T UNDERSTAND IT, CAPTAIN.
THE RADIO DON'T SEEM TO BE WORKIN'!

NOT WORKIN'? ANY IDEA WHAT'S WRONG?
DON'T KNOW, SIR. SHE CHECKED OUT A-OK BACK AT THE BASE BUT--
WHAT IN--? THE MASTER TRANSMITTER TUBE -- IT'S GONE--
--AN' WITHOUT IT, WE AIN'T CALLIN' NOBODY FOR NOTHIN'!

SWELL! THEN WE MAY NEVER GET THE ALIEN OUT OF THIS SWAMP!
LOOKS LIKE WE GOT OURSELVES A PROBLEM THEN, DON'T IT?
WONDER WHERE THAT FLAMIN' RADIO TUBE WENT TO, ANYHOW?


WHILE A DOZEN YARDS AWAY, AS IF RECOILING FROM CAPTAIN SAMSON'S COLD-BLOODED SARCASM, THE STAGNANT SWAMP WATERS BEGIN TO RIPPLE AND STIR--
--BRACKISH BUBBLES ARE BELCHED UP ANEW TO BREAK THE MIRE'S SURFACE...
--FOLLOWED BY WHAT HAS NOW BECOME A MOST FAMILIAR HAND.
HIS VERY ESSENCES RESTORED BY THE CHEMICAL-TAINTED OOZE THAT CONCEIVED HIM, THE SWAMP THING LIVES AGAIN--
--IF ONE COULD TRULY CALL THIS LIVING!
THOUGHT THAT FALLING ROCKET... HAD KILLED ME... BUT THIS CURSED BOG... REVIVED ME SOMEHOW...!
DON'T KNOW HOW LONG... I'VE BEEN OUT... SO I'D BEST... GET BACK TO THE BARN... AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE...!
I STILL HAVE A SCORE ...TO SETTLE WITH... A CERTAIN ALIEN SQUATTER WHO...
HUH...?
THIS IS NOT... QUITE AT ALL... WHAT I'D EXPECTED...!
THE ALIEN... A PRISONER OF MATT CABLE... AND FIVE OTHERS..!
BETTER KEEP OUT OF SIGHT... UNTIL I KNOW EXACTLY... WHAT'S GOING ON...!
LOOK AT THAT UGLY BRUTE--STANDIN' THERE QUIET AS A TOMB.
YOU KNOW, IF I WAS A RELIGIOUS MAN, I'D SWEAR IT WAS AN AGENT OF THE DEVIL HIMSELF.
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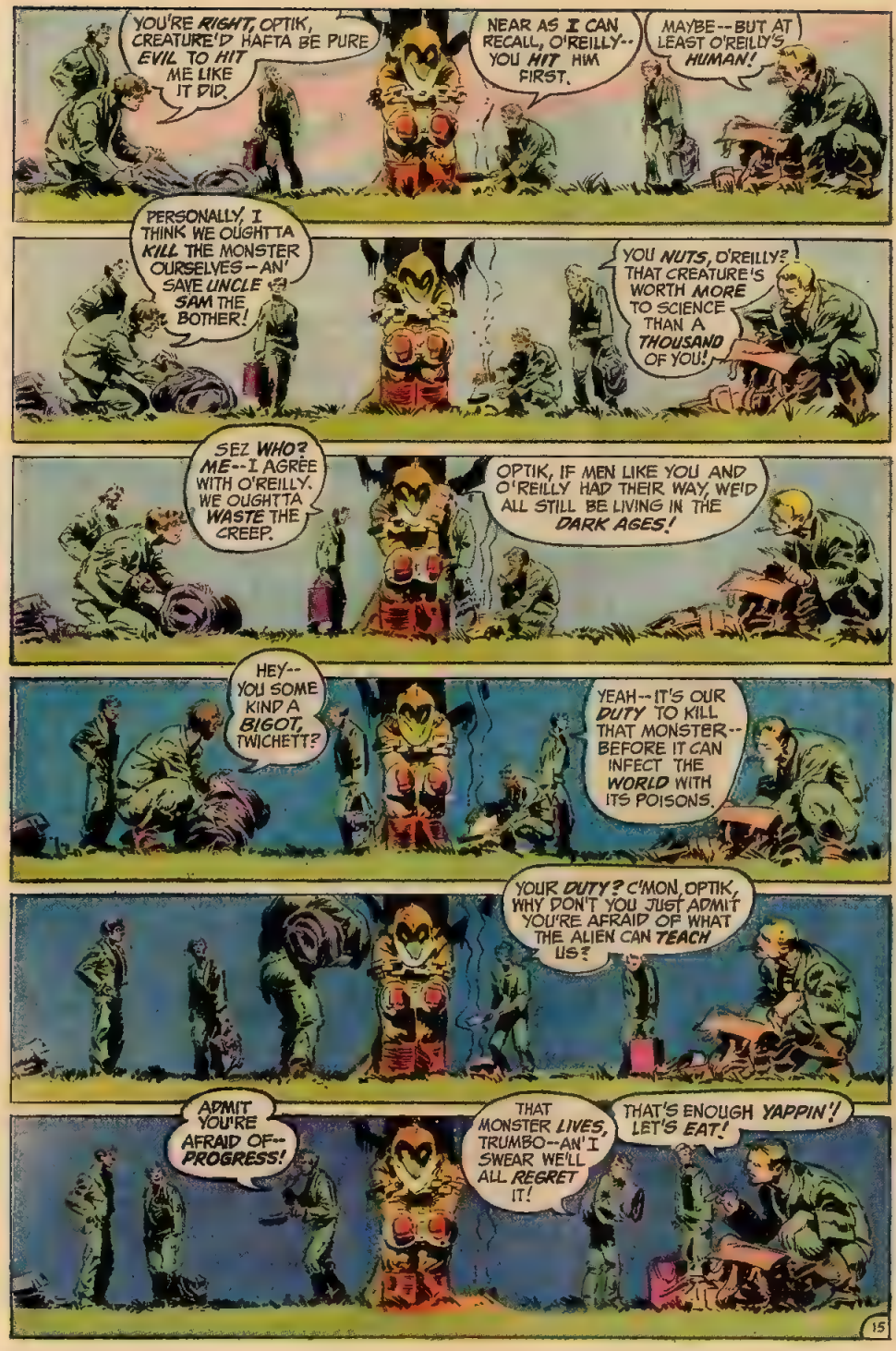
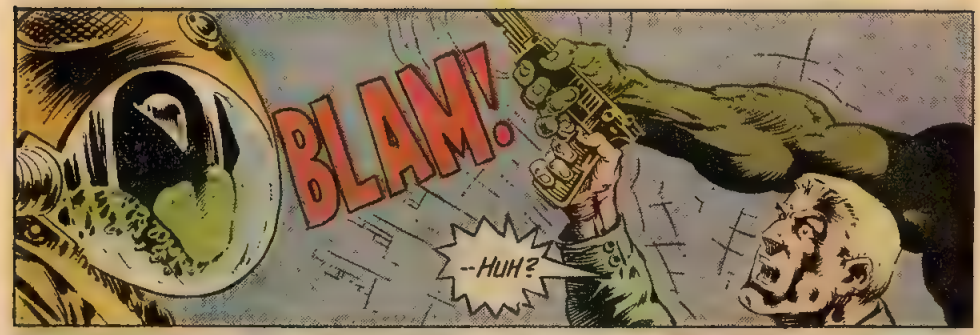
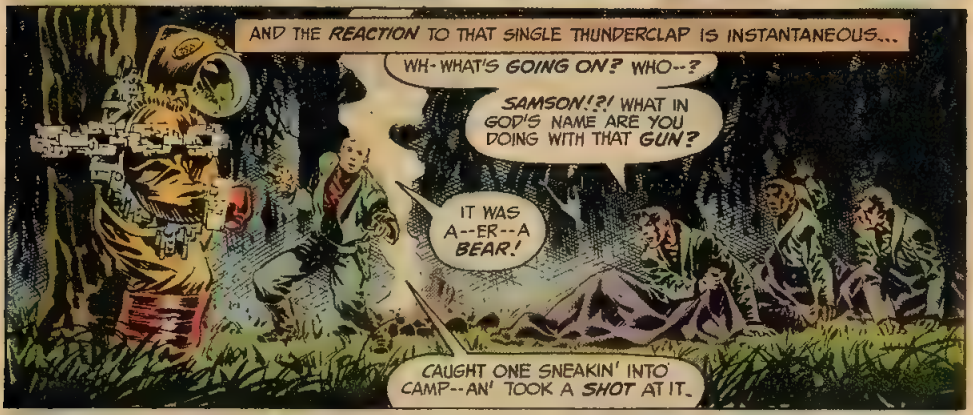

YOU'RE RIGHT, OPTIK, CREATURE'D HAFTA BE PURE EVIL TO HIT ME LIKE IT DID.
NEAR AS I CAN RECALL, O'REILLY-- YOU HIT HIM FIRST.
MAYBE--BUT AT LEAST O'REILLY'S HUMAN!
PERSONALLY, I THINK WE OUGHTTA KILL THE MONSTER OURSELVES--AN' SAVE UNCLE SAM THE BOTHER!
YOU NUTS, O'REILLY? THAT CREATURE'S WORTH MORE TO SCIENCE THAN A THOUSAND OF YOU!
SEZ WHO? ME--I AGREE WITH O'REILLY. WE OUGHTTA WASTE THE CREEP.
OPTIK, IF MEN LIKE YOU AND O'REILLY HAD THEIR WAY, WE'D ALL STILL BE LIVING IN THE DARK AGES!
HEY-- YOU SOME KIND A BIGOT, TWICHETT?
YEAH--IT'S OUR DUTY TO KILL THAT MONSTER-- BEFORE IT CAN INFECT THE WORLD WITH ITS POISONS.
YOUR DUTY? C'MON, OPTIK, WHY DON'T YOU JUST ADMIT YOU'RE AFRAID OF WHAT THE ALIEN CAN TEACH US?
ADMIT YOU'RE AFRAID OF-- PROGRESS!
THAT MONSTER LIVES, TRUMBO--AN' I SWEAR WE'LL ALL REGRET IT!
THAT'S ENOUGH YAPPIN'! LET'S EAT!

"SAVE THE CREATURE OR SLAY IT?" THE QUESTION SEEMS PURELY RHETORICAL--A WAY TO BLOW OFF STEAM--SO THE SIX MEN EAGERLY CONTINUE THEIR ARGUMENT LONG INTO THE EVENING--
--BUT IN THE MORNING WILL COME THE DIFFICULT TASK OF BRINGING THE ALIEN OUT OF THE SWAMP ON FOOT AND THESE MEN WILL NEED THEIR REST--SO, AT LAST, THE HEATED CONVERSATION COOLS TO A WHISPER--AND SOON ALL ARE ASLEEP--
--ALL SAVE ONE!
CLICK
YOU BEEN LISTENIN', HAVEN'T YA, MONSTER? YOU HEARD EVERYTHING WE SAID TONIGHT, DIDN'T YA?
WELL, THEY'RE RIGHT, YA KNOW--OPTIK AN' O'REILLY--YOU ARE A MENACE--A DISEASE!
BRING YOU BACK TO CIVILIZATION --AN' EVERY BLEEDIN'-HEART KID IN THE COUNTRY'LL HAVE A NEW CAUSE TO RALLY AROUND.
SURE. I CAN SEE THE HEADLINES NOW, "MENACE ...OR MESSIAH?"
HELL, WITHOUT HALF TRYIN', YOU COULD BECOME THE MOST POWERFUL THING ON EARTH--AN' I CAN'T ALLOW THAT.
YOU'RE FOREIGN--A DAMNED ALIEN--YOU DON'T BELONG HERE--
--AND I'M NOT GONNA LET YOU STAY AN' DESTROY WHAT LITTLE CHANCE THIS PLANET HAS LEFT.
YOU UNDERSTAND THIS IS NOTHIN' PERSONAL, DON'T YA?
JUST THOUGHT YOU SHOULD KNOW THE REASONS WHY--
16

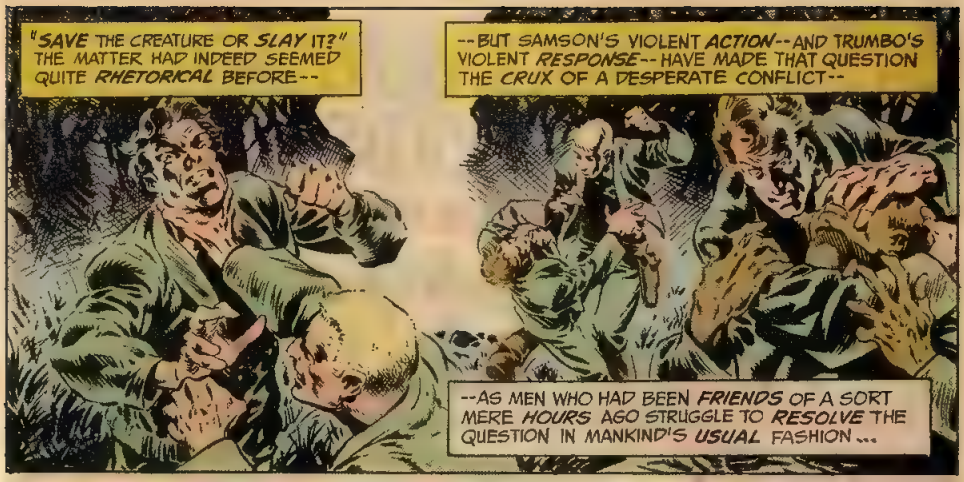

BLAM!
--HUH?

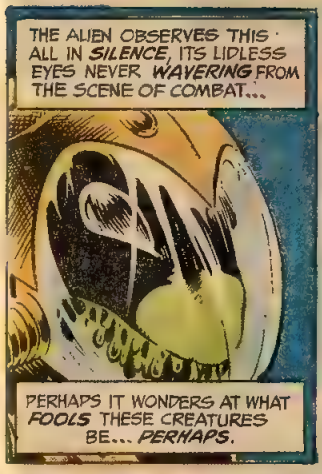

AND THE REACTION TO THAT SINGLE THUNDERCLAP IS INSTANTANEOUS...
WH-WHAT'S GOING ON? WHO--?
SAMSON!?! WHAT IN GOD'S NAME ARE YOU DOING WITH THAT GUN?
IT WAS A--ER--A BEAR!
CAUGHT ONE SNEAKIN' INTO CAMP--AN' TOOK A SHOT AT IT.

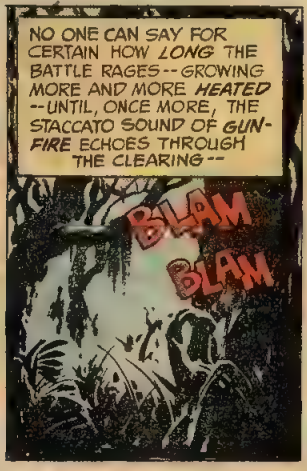
I'VE GOT NEWS FOR YOU, SAMSON--THERE ARE NO BEARS IN THE BAYOU.
YOU WERE TRYING TO SHOOT THE ALIEN, WEREN'T YOU, MANIAC?
WEREN'T YOU??
AND WHAT IF I WAS, BRIGHT BOY?

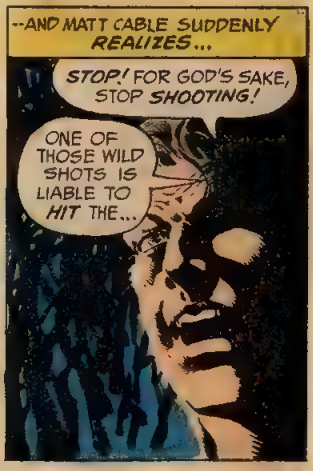
I WAS DOIN' IT TO SAVE YOUR SKIN, TOO.
I'M DOIN' IT TO SAVE EVERYONE--BEFORE THAT MONSTER DESTROYS US ALL FROM WITHIN--
--AND I'LL KILL ANYONE WHO TRIES TO STOP ME!
WHOK!

SURE HOPE YOU DON'T MIND MY SAYING SO, CAPTAIN, SIR--
--BUT YOU HAVE GONE OUT OF YOUR EVER-LOVIN' MIND!
UUNNFF!

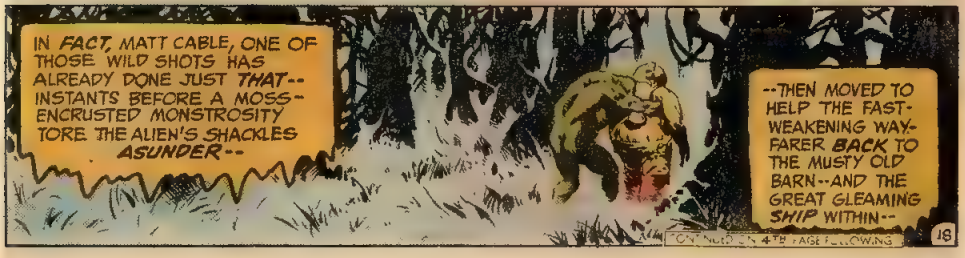

"SAVE THE CREATURE OR SLAY IT?" THE MATTER HAD INDEED SEEMED QUITE RHETORICAL BEFORE--
--BUT SAMSON'S VIOLENT ACTION--AND TRUMBO'S VIOLENT RESPONSE--HAVE MADE THAT QUESTION THE CRUX OF A DESPERATE CONFLICT--
--AS MEN WHO HAD BEEN FRIENDS OF A SORT MERE HOURS AGO STRUGGLE TO RESOLVE THE QUESTION IN MANKIND'S USUAL FASHION...


THE ALIEN OBSERVES THIS ALL IN SILENCE, ITS LIDLESS EYES NEVER WAVERING FROM THE SCENE OF COMBAT...
PERHAPS IT WONDERS AT WHAT FOOLS THESE CREATURES BE... PERHAPS.

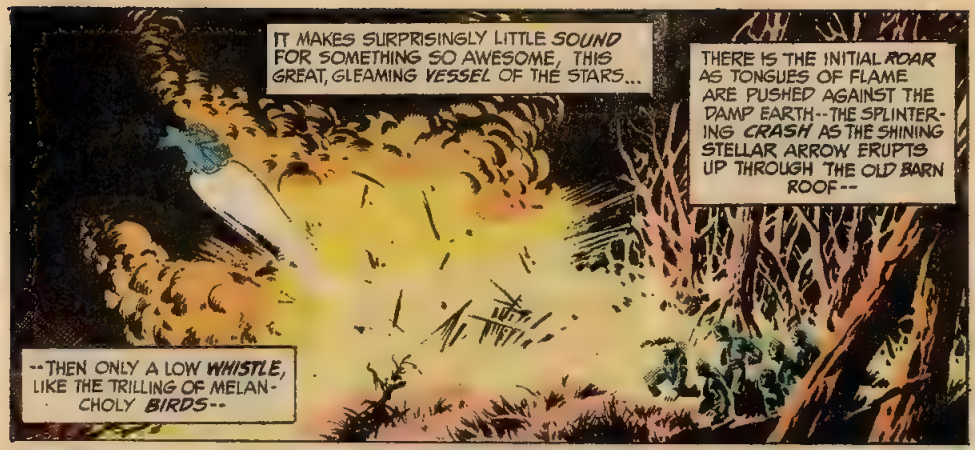

NO ONE CAN SAY FOR CERTAIN HOW LONG THE BATTLE RAGES--GROWING MORE AND MORE HEATED--UNTIL, ONCE MORE, THE STACCATO SOUND OF GUN-FIRE ECHOES THROUGH THE CLEARING--
BLAM
BLAM

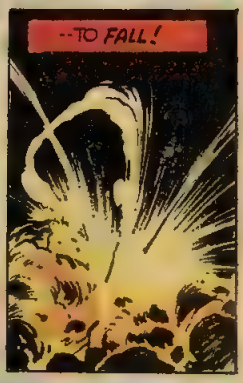

--AND MATT CABLE SUDDENLY REALIZES...
STOP! FOR GOD'S SAKE, STOP SHOOTING!
ONE OF THOSE WILD SHOTS IS LIABLE TO HIT THE...

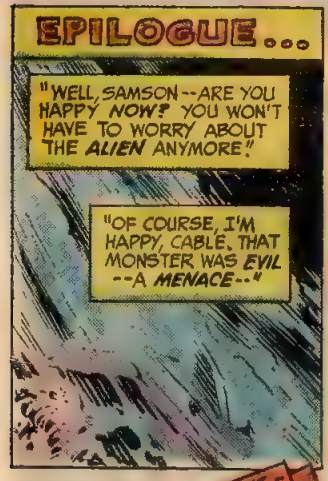
...ALIEN...?

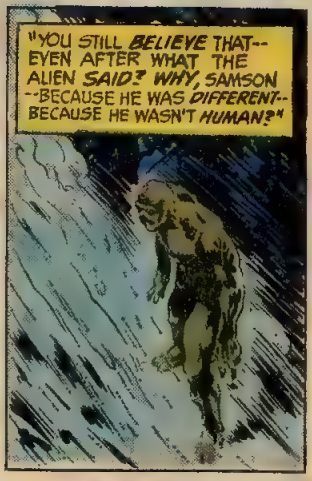

IN FACT, MATT CABLE, ONE OF THOSE WILD SHOTS HAS ALREADY DONE JUST THAT--INSTANTS BEFORE A MOSS-ENCRUSTED MONSTROSITY TORE THE ALIEN'S SHACKLES ASUNDER--
--THEN MOVED TO HELP THE FAST-WEAKENING WAY-FARER BACK TO THE MUSTY OLD BARN--AND THE GREAT GLEAMING SHIP WITHIN--
CONTINUED ON 4TH PAGE FOLLOWING

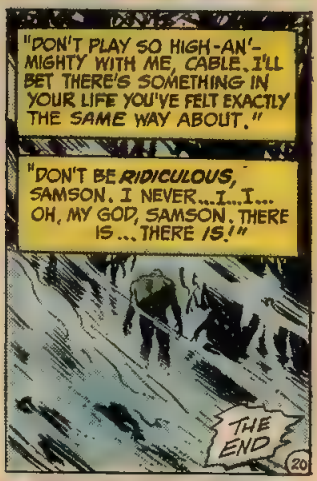
NO WORDS NEED BE SPOKEN HERE. THE ALIEN PLACES ITS EXTREMITY UPON THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE'S SHOULDER IN A UNIVERSAL GESTURE--
--A GESTURE THAT HAS A RATHER SINGULAR EFFECT.
THE SWAMP THING VANISHES--
--AND AS THE SPACE TRAVELER TURNS TO ENTER ITS SHIP...
DON'T MOVE! STOP WHERE YOU ARE OR...
NO--THIS--TIME--IT--IS--YOU--WHO--WILL--STOP--!
HUH? H-HE'S THROWN UP SOME SORT OF FORCE FIELD AROUND US--?
AND HE--HE'S TALKING!
YES--I--HAVE--HEARD--ENOUGH--OF--YOUR--LANGUAGE--AT--LAST--TO--COMMUNICATE--WITH--YOU--
--BUT--WHAT--I--HAVE--HEARD--SICKENS--ME--!
I--CAME--TO--YOU--IN--PEACE--BUT--I--HAVE--FOUND--ONLY--VIOLENCE--HERE--!
I--LANDED--HERE--BY--ACCIDENT--A--VICTIM--OF--A--COSMIC--STORM--!
I--NEEDED--ONLY--YOUR--HELP--IN--REPAIRING--MY--SHIP--AND--WOULD--HAVE--GIVEN--YOU--MUCH--IN--RETURN--
BUT--NOW--ALL--I--HAVE--FOR--YOU--IS--PITY--!
HEY--THE BUBBLE'S DISSOLVING!
THEN LET'S GET OUT OF HERE--FAST!
THAT SHIP IS TAKING OFF!
19


IT MAKES SURPRISINGLY LITTLE SOUND FOR SOMETHING SO AWESOME, THIS GREAT, GLEAMING VESSEL OF THE STARS...
THERE IS THE INITIAL ROAR AS TONGUES OF FLAME ARE PUSHED AGAINST THE DAMP EARTH--THE SPLINTERING CRASH AS THE SHINING STELLAR ARROW ERUPTS UP THROUGH THE OLD BARN ROOF--
--THEN ONLY A LOW WHISTLE, LIKE THE TRILLING OF MELANCHOLY BIRDS--




EPILOGUE...
"WELL, SAMSON--ARE YOU HAPPY NOW? YOU WON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT THE ALIEN ANYMORE."
"OF COURSE, I'M HAPPY, CABLE, THAT MONSTER WAS EVIL --A MENACE--"




"DON'T PLAY SO HIGH-AN'-MIGHTY WITH ME, CABLE. I'LL BET THERE'S SOMETHING IN YOUR LIFE YOU'VE FELT EXACTLY THE SAME WAY ABOUT."
"DON'T BE RIDICULOUS, SAMSON. I NEVER...I...I... OH, MY GOD, SAMSON. THERE IS...THERE IS!"
THE END
20

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN FEBRUARY

THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT DIE!

THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
SWAMP THING
20c
NO. 10
JUNE
30686
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

HE HAS BEEN RUNNING FOR MANY HOURS NOW, IGNORING THE SEARING PAINS THAT LANCE THROUGH HIS CHEST--AND, AT LAST, HE HAS LEFT THE MOURNFUL BAYING OF THE BLOODHOUNDS FAR BEHIND...
HIS NAME IS "HUNK" DORRY, NUMBER 2431975. HE IS A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG. IN HIS TIME, HE HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF MURDERING MANY MEN--
--AND HE FIGURES THAT, AT THIS LATE DATE, ANOTHER VICTIM MORE OR LESS WILL NOT MAKE A BIT OF DIFFERENCE...
LEN WEIN (SCRIPT) BERNI WRIGHTSON (PLOT & ART) JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENT...
SWAMP THING
...BUT TO THE HUGE, SHAMBLING, MOSS-ENCRUSTED MONSTROSITY STANDING IN THE SHADOWS AT THE CLEARING'S EDGE, IT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD!
THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT DIE!

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DON'T KNOW WHUT YOU COOKIN' IN THET POT O' YOURS, OLD WOMAN--!
--BUT I BEEN RUNNIN' SO LONG-- HURTIN' SO BAD--FEELIN' SO MEAN-- THET I AIN'T ABOUT TO ASK FER NO HANDOUT NOW!
I'M JEST GONNA KNOCK YOU OFF--AN' TAKE WHUT I--!
NO!!
HUH? AIN'T NOBODY TELLS "HUNK" DORRY WHUT TO DO--!
BUT THE SWAMP THING LUMBERS OUT OF THE DARKNESS THEN, DRIPPING A MOSSY WET TRAIL BEHIND HIM--AND THE BLOOD OF THE MAN NAMED "HUNK" DORRY SUDDENLY RUNS COLDER THAN EVER IT HAS BEFORE...
LORD A'MIGHTY!
WH-WHUT INNA NAME O' MARY IS-- THAT?
DON'T KNOW WHUT KIND O' MONSTER YOU KEEP AS A PET, OLD WITCH--
--BUT "HUNK" DORRY AIN'T NEVER RUN FROM NO FIGHT WITH NOTHIN'--
--AN' I AIN'T--
--ABOUT TO--
--START--
--NOWWWW--
2

NO USE FUSSIN' OVER HIM, CHILE-- HE'S STONE DEAD!
AIN'T NOBODY THAT KIN LIVE TOO LONG WITH THAT MANY BULLETS IN HIM--
--'CEPTIN' MAYBE YOU, I WAGER!
S'POSE YOU WONDERIN' WHY YOUR OLD AUNTIE DE LUVIAN IS JEST SETTIN' HERE TALKIN'--
--'STEAD O' SCOOTIN' AWAY FROM YOU LIKE THAT OLE DEVIL WAS ON MAH TAIL?
JEST TOO OLD, I RECKON!
SEEN TOO MANY DOWNRIGHT AWFUL THINGS TO CARE MUCH ANY MORE!
YES'M, CHILE--THIS OLE LAND'S GOT A POWERFUL MEAN WAY OF TREATIN' THE FOLKS WHUT LIVES HERE!
NOT THAT IT WAS ALWAYS THIS WAY, MIND YOU!
TIME WAS THIS LAND WAS RICH AN' GREEN--AN' SO AL'MIGHTY BEAUTIFUL THE GOOD LORD HIMSELF MUST'A ENVIED IT!

"THERE WAS A COTTON PLANTATION HERE THEN, A GREAT WARM WHITE-BRICK BUILDIN,' FRONTED WITH TALL MARBLE COLUMNS, BORDERED WITH ROSES AS SWEET AS A SUMMER'S DAWN--
--AN, FOR A SLAVE, PLANTATION LIFE MIGHT O' BEEN ALMOST PLEASANT--

"--IF'N IT WASN'T FOR THE MONSTER THAT OWNED IT!
"SAMSON PARMINTER, HIS NAME WAS-- BUT THEY MIGHT JUST AS WELL CALLED HIM LUCIFER... BEELZEBUB... OR SATAN!

"A CUSSED MEAN ONE, HE WAS-- BORN WITH SOMETHIN' MISSIN' IN HIS SOUL-- BORN WITH A POWERFUL NEED TO HURT--TO PAIN THOSE WHAT SERVED HIM!

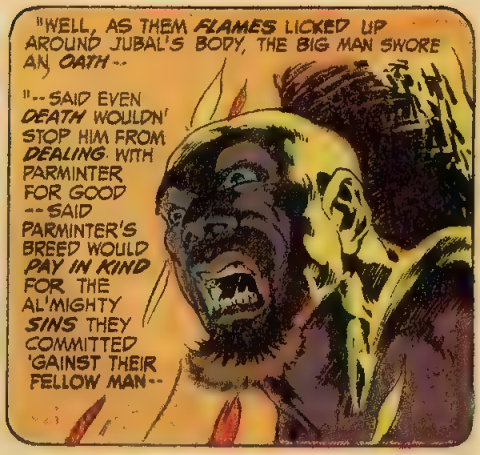
"THE SLAVES, THEY ALL HATED PARMINTER--BUT THERE WAS NOTHIN' THEY COULD DO--
"--TILL THE DAY PARMINTER TOOK A SHINE TO A PURTY YOUNG THING NAMED ELSBETH!

"NOW ELSBETH, SHE WOULDN' HAVE NO PART O' PARMINTER--TOLD HIM SHE WAS ALREADY PROMISED TO AN-OTHER--
"--AND PARMINTER--WELL, HE DECIDED HE'D JEST AS SOON HAVE HER TORN LIMB-FROM-LIMB AS SPIT ON HER!

"THAT WAS PARMINTER'S BIGGEST MISTAKE-- 'CAUSE THAT'S WHEN BLACK JUBAL STEPPED OUT FROM THE SLAVES! SEEMS HE WAS THE ONE ELSBETH WAS PROMISED TO!

"NOW BLACK JUBAL, HE JEST STOOD RIGHT UP TO OLE PARMINTER--TOLD HIM OFF STRAIGHT TO HIS FACE--
"--AN' PARMINTER, HE DIDN'T LIKE THAT!
"NO, HE DIDN'T LIKE THAT A'TALL!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING
4

"NOW PARMINTER COULDN'T TEAR JUBAL'S LIMBS OFF--HE'D ALREADY TAKEN ONE ARM WHEN JUBAL WAS JEST A CHILE--
"--SO THAT MONSTER DECIDED TO BURN JUBAL INSTEAD--SAID IT WAS THE WAY ALL GOOD MARTYRS DIED!


"WELL, AS THEM FLAMES LICKED UP AROUND JUBAL'S BODY, THE BIG MAN SWORE AN OATH--
"--SAID EVEN DEATH WOULDN' STOP HIM FROM DEALING WITH PARMINTER FOR GOOD --SAID PARMINTER'S BREED WOULD PAY IN KIND FOR THE AL'MIGHTY SINS THEY COMMITTED 'GAINST THEIR FELLOW MAN--

"--BUT PARMINTER, HE JEST LAUGHED--AND ONCE BLACK JUBAL WAS BURIED AN' GONE, HE WENT RIGHT ON BACK TO HAVIN' HIS 'FUN'--

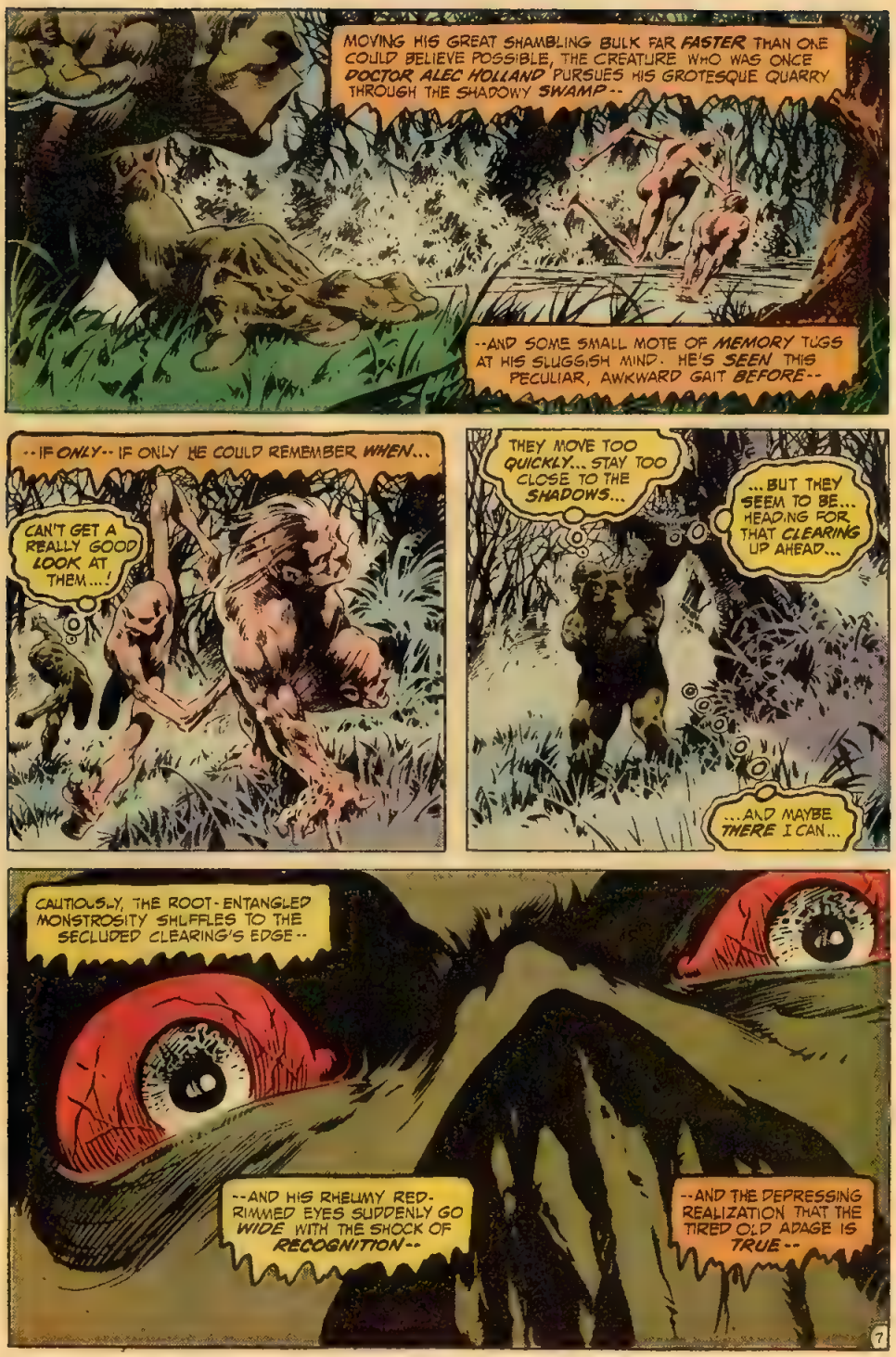
"--AN' IF THE SINS HE'D COMMITTED BEFORE WERE BAD--THEM THAT FOLLOWED WAS WORSE--

"--ALMOST AS IF HE WAS DARIN' OLE BLACK JUBAL TO RISE ON UP OUT O' THE GROUND AN' MAKE HIM STOP LIKE HE SWORE HE WOULD!

"NOW THE SLAVES, ALL THEY COULD DO WAS SUFFER AN' PRAY SOMEBODY ELSE WOULD COME ALONG TO STOP PARMINTER--AN' ONE NIGHT, SOMEBODY--OR SOME THING--DID!
"THEY HEARD NOISES FROM THE OLE PLANTATION--SOUNDS LIKE THE AGONIZED SCREAMIN' O' SOMETHIN' UNHUMAN--

"--AN' WHEN THEY RUSHED INSIDE, THEY FOUND MISTER PARMINTER--IN THE FOYER--THE LIVIN' ROOM--THE PANTRY--THE DEN--!
"SOMETHING HAD TORN SAMSON PARMINTER LIMB-FROM-LIMB!"

THINGS KIND O' FELL APART AFTER THAT, CHILE!
MOST O' THE SLAVES, THEY RUN AWAY -- LET THE OLE PLANTATION TUMBLE INTO RUIN --
-- BUT OLE AUNTIE DE LUVIAN -- WELL, I JEST DIDN' HAVE NOWHERES ELSE TO GO!
NOT THAT I MINDS MAH LOT CHILE -- I KNOW TS FOR THE BEST!
WHEN YOU GETS AS OLD AS OLE AUNTIE -- YOU KNOW ALL KINDS O' STUFF!
-- LIKE I KNOWS THAT THE EYES OF UNHOLY THINGS ARE STARIN' AT US RIGHT THIS VERY SECON'!
THE EYES OF ... WHAT...??
THE OLD WOMAN IS RIGHT...! I CAN SEE THE EYES... GLEAMING OUT OF THE DARKNESS.
... AND I THINK I'D BETTER ... FIND OUT WHO THEY BELONG TO...!


MOVING HIS GREAT SHAMBLING BULK FAR FASTER THAN ONE COULD BELIEVE POSSIBLE, THE CREATURE WHO WAS ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND PURSUES HIS GROTESQUE QUARRY THROUGH THE SHADOWY SWAMP--
--AND SOME SMALL MOTE OF MEMORY TUGS AT HIS SLUGGISH MIND. HE'S SEEN THIS PECULIAR, AWKWARD GAIT BEFORE--
--IF ONLY-- IF ONLY HE COULD REMEMBER WHEN...
CAN'T GET A REALLY GOOD LOOK AT THEM...!
THEY MOVE TOO QUICKLY... STAY TOO CLOSE TO THE SHADOWS...
...BUT THEY SEEM TO BE... HEADING FOR THAT CLEARING UP AHEAD...
...AND MAYBE THERE I CAN...
CAUTIOUSLY, THE ROOT-ENTANGLED MONSTROSITY SHUFFLES TO THE SECLUDED CLEARING'S EDGE--
--AND HIS RHEUMY RED-RIMMED EYES SUDDENLY GO WIDE WITH THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION--
--AND THE DEPRESSING REALIZATION THAT THE TIRED OLD ADAGE IS TRUE--

--"ONLY THE GOOD DIE YOUNG"--WHILE THE EVIL LIVE ON--POSSIBLY FOREVER--
--FOR BEFORE THE ASTONISHED SWAMP THING RISE A HANDFUL OF THE HIDEOUS UN-MEN--SYNTHETICALLY-CREATED BEINGS THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE THOUGHT LONG-DEAD AT THE FOOT OF A BALKAN PEAK--*
WELCOME, MY MOSSY FRIEND--
--WE HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU!
--NOW HORRIBLY, UNIMAGINABLY, RESURRECTED--TO STAND AS GRINNING MOCKERIES IN A KINGDOM OF THE DEAD..
*AS SEEN IN SWAMP THING #2.
CONTINUED ON 3-UP PAGE FOLLOWING.
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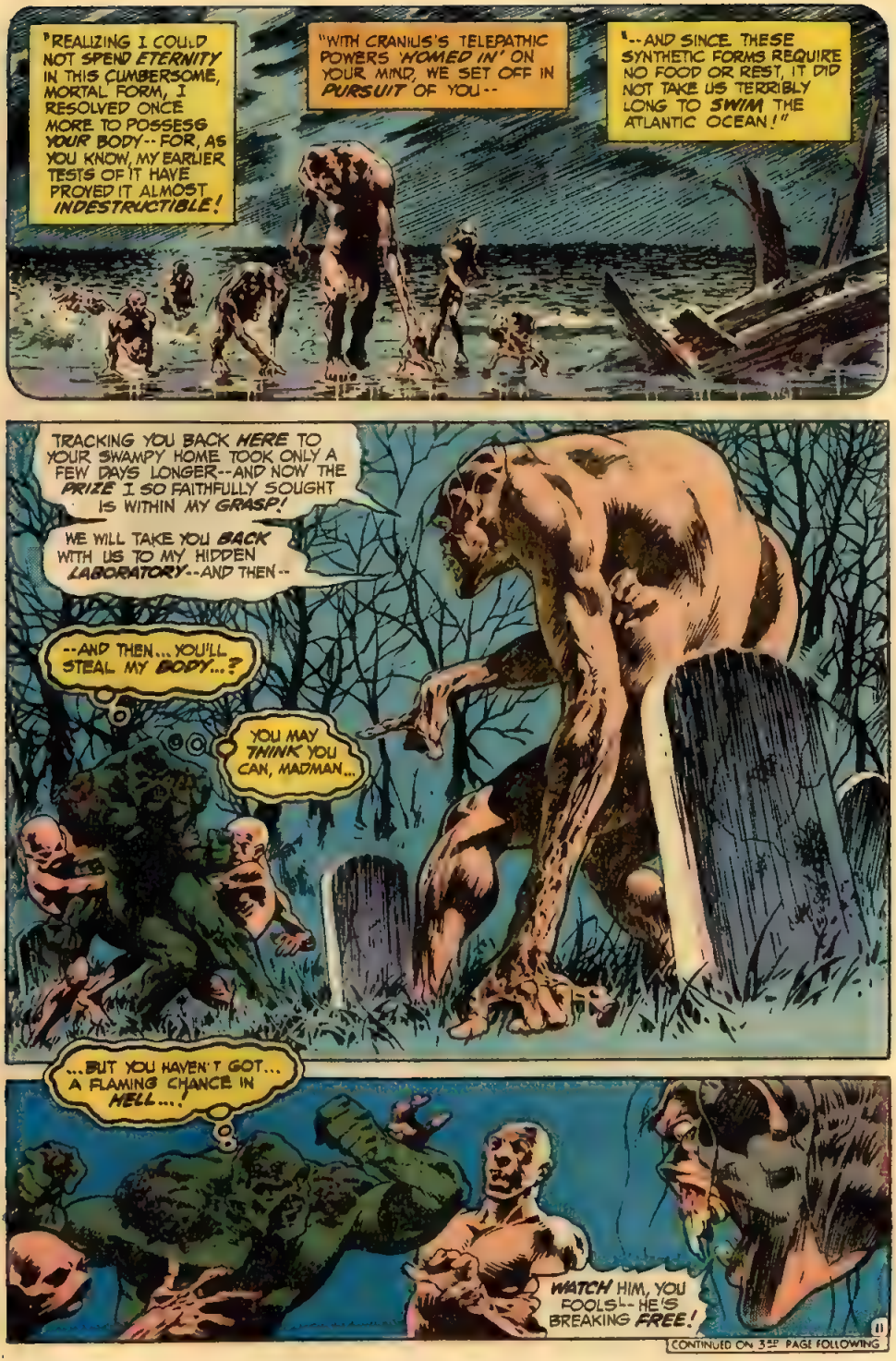
AH, I SEE CONFUSION IN YOUR EYES! YOU RECOGNIZE MY UN-MEN -- BUT NOT ME!
THEN PERMIT ME TO REINTRODUCE MYSELF --
--I AM-- ARCANE--

--AND I HAVE COME TO CLAIM WHAT IS MINE!
SEIZE HIM, MY PETS!

LIKE CHILDREN IN A SCHOOLYARD THE UN-MEN SCAMPER FORWARD --AND BEFORE THE STARTLED SWAMP THING HAS TIME TO REACT--

--HE HAS ALREADY LOST THE GAME!
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RISE, MY FRIEND--
--OR WE WILL ONLY BE FORCED TO REPEAT THIS PERFORMANCE--
--MORE VIOLENTLY THAN BEFORE!
9

UNDOUBTEDLY, YOU ARE WONDERING HOW I SURVIVED THE FALL FROM MY TOWER--AND HOW MY MAGNIFICENT MIND CAME TO BE IN THIS GROSS, MISSHAPEN FORM--
--AND SINCE YOU, ABOVE ANYONE ELSE IN THIS WORLD, WOULD APPRECIATE THE IRONY OF IT ALL--
--I SHALL TELL YOU!
"IN TRUTH, I DID NOT SURVIVE THE FALL! THOUGH THE SPARK OF LIFE REMAINED WITHIN ME--
"I HAD SHATTERED EVERY SINGLE BONE IN MY BODY!
"THOSE FEW REMAINING OF MY UN-MEN, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE LIVING BRAIN, CRANIUS, CARRIED MY BROKEN BODY TO A SECRET LABORATORY--
"--WHERE UNDER MY SEMI-TELEPATHIC CONTROL, CRANIUS SUPERVISED THE PRODUCTION OF A MIRACLE!
"FROM A VAST SUPPLY OF COMPONENT PARTS I HAD STORED THERE FOR JUST SUCH AN EMERGENCY, THEY CONSTRUCTED A SYNTHETIC BODY TO HOUSE MY UNDAMAGED MIND--
"--BUT, WITHOUT MY MASTERFUL HAND TO GUIDE THEM, THE RESULTS OF THE OPERATION WERE--
"--ER--SOMEWHAT LESS THAN PERFECT!
10


"REALIZING I COULD NOT SPEND ETERNITY IN THIS CUMBERSOME, MORTAL FORM, I RESOLVED ONCE MORE TO POSSESS YOUR BODY-- FOR, AS YOU KNOW, MY EARLIER TESTS OF IT HAVE PROVED IT ALMOST INDESTRUCTIBLE!
"WITH CRANIUS'S TELEPATHIC POWERS 'HOMED IN' ON YOUR MIND, WE SET OFF IN PURSUIT OF YOU--
"--AND SINCE THESE SYNTHETIC FORMS REQUIRE NO FOOD OR REST, IT DID NOT TAKE US TERRIBLY LONG TO SWIM THE ATLANTIC OCEAN!"
TRACKING YOU BACK HERE TO YOUR SWAMPY HOME TOOK ONLY A FEW DAYS LONGER--AND NOW THE PRIZE I SO FAITHFULLY SOUGHT IS WITHIN MY GRASP!
WE WILL TAKE YOU BACK WITH US TO MY HIDDEN LABORATORY--AND THEN--
--AND THEN... YOU'LL STEAL MY BODY...?
YOU MAY THINK YOU CAN, MADMAN...
...BUT YOU HAVEN'T GOT... A FLAMING CHANCE IN HELL...!
WATCH HIM, YOU FOOLS!-- HE'S BREAKING FREE!

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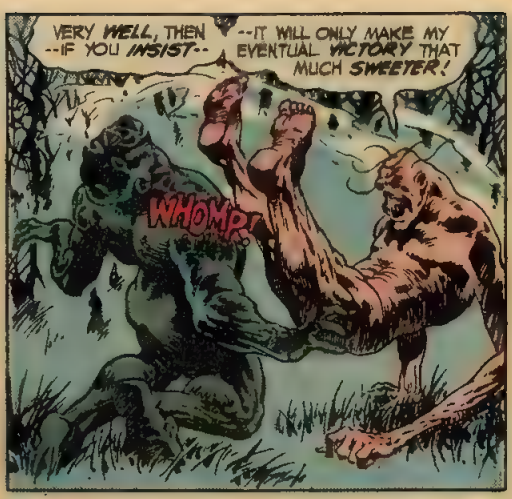
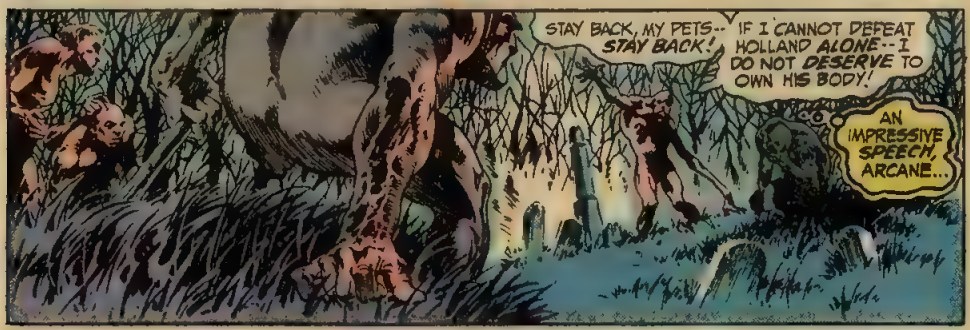
I'VE BROKEN FREE, ARCANE... AND NOW...
SO, MY FRIEND--YOU SEEK TO MAKE ME EARN YOUR BODY?

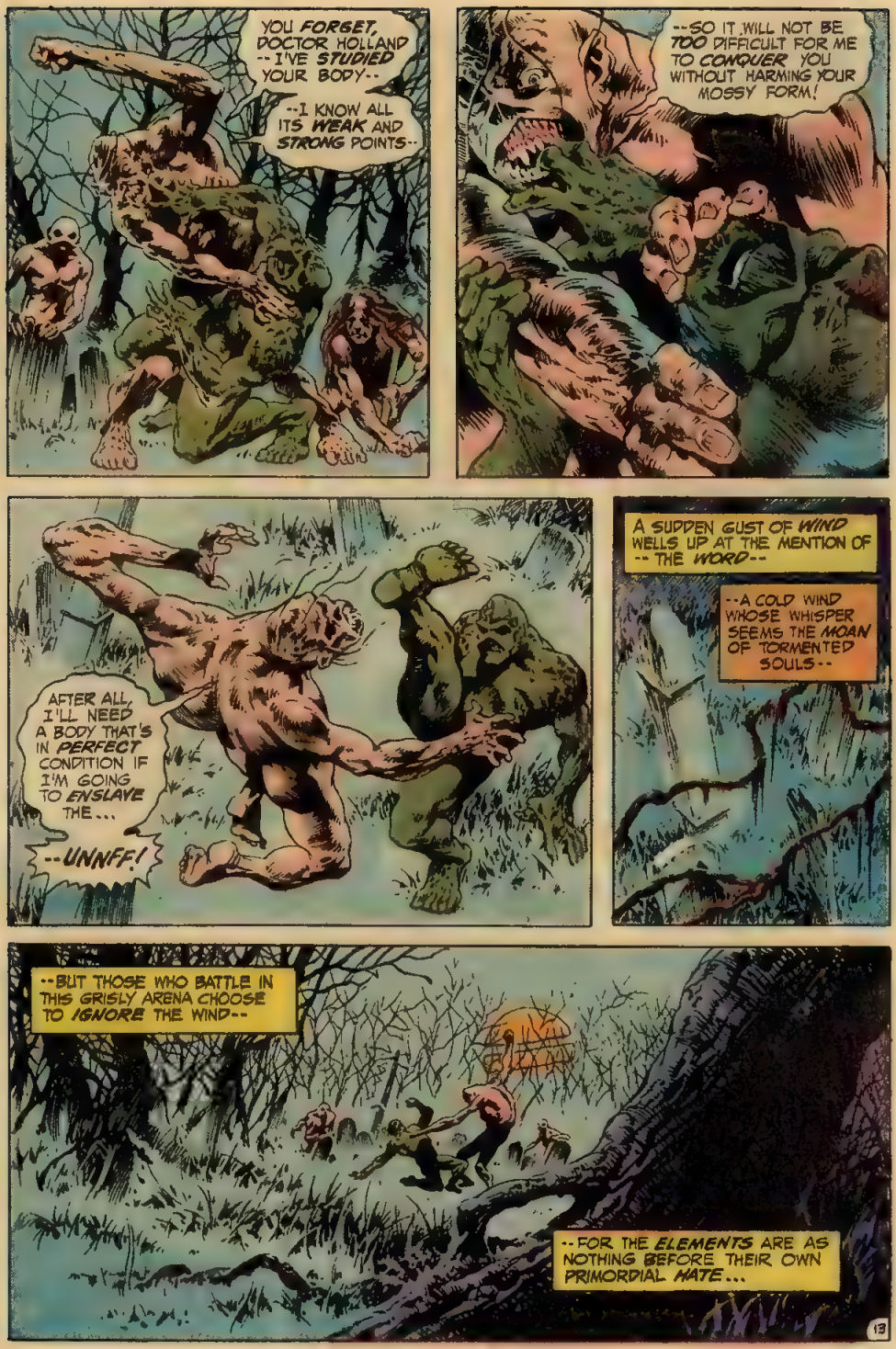

VERY WELL, THEN --IF YOU INSIST--
--IT WILL ONLY MAKE MY EVENTUAL VICTORY THAT MUCH SWEETER!
WHOMP!


STAY BACK, MY PETS-- STAY BACK!
IF I CANNOT DEFEAT HOLLAND ALONE--I DO NOT DESERVE TO OWN HIS BODY!
AN IMPRESSIVE SPEECH, ARCANE...

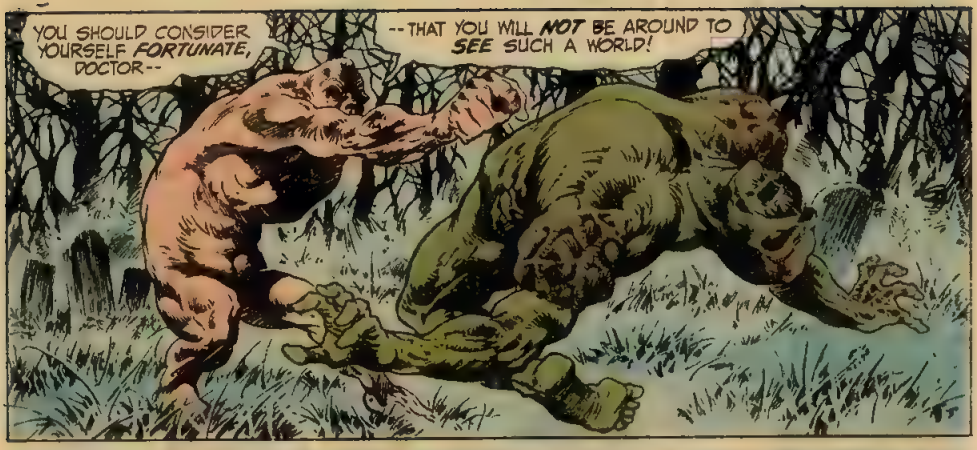
...A SHAME YOUR WORDS ARE AS HOLLOW ...AS YOUR HEAD...!
BROK!

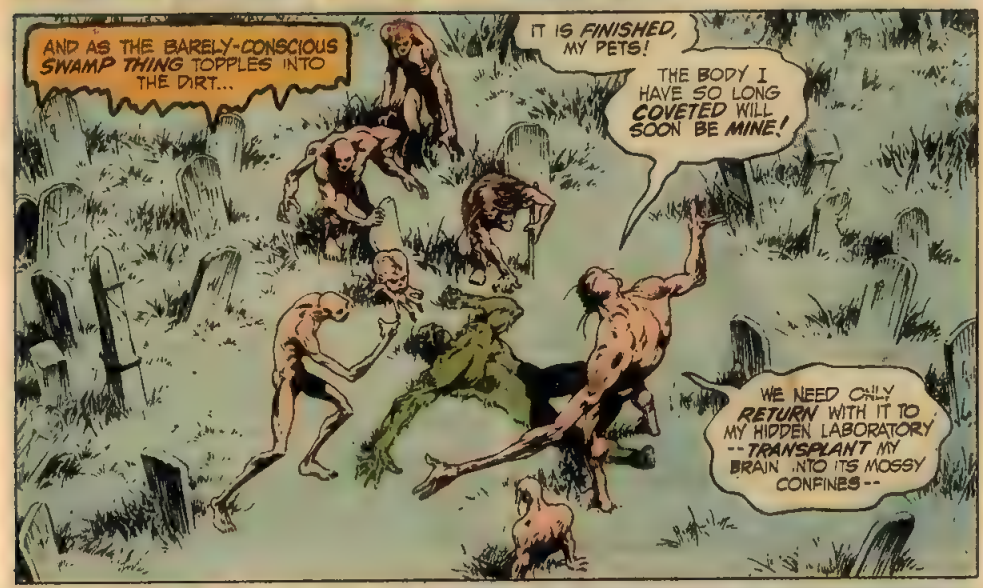
WELL STRUCK, DOCTOR! YOU'RE A MOST WORTHY ADVERSARY!
IT WOULD SEEM I AM IN FOR THE BATTLE OF MY LIFE!

A PITY, THEN, THAT THE BATTLE WILL BE SUCH A SHORT ONE!

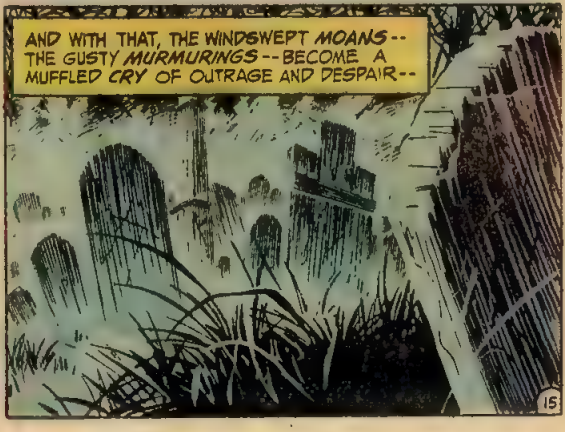

YOU FORGET, DOCTOR HOLLAND -- I'VE STUDIED YOUR BODY--
--I KNOW ALL ITS WEAK AND STRONG POINTS--
--SO IT WILL NOT BE TOO DIFFICULT FOR ME TO CONQUER YOU WITHOUT HARMING YOUR MOSSY FORM!
AFTER ALL, I'LL NEED A BODY THAT'S IN PERFECT CONDITION IF I'M GOING TO ENSLAVE THE...
--UNNFF!
A SUDDEN GUST OF WIND WELLS UP AT THE MENTION OF -- THE WORD--
--A COLD WIND WHOSE WHISPER SEEMS THE MOAN OF TORMENTED SOULS--
--BUT THOSE WHO BATTLE IN THIS GRISLY ARENA CHOOSE TO IGNORE THE WIND--
--FOR THE ELEMENTS ARE AS NOTHING BEFORE THEIR OWN PRIMORDIAL HATE...

FALL, HOLLAND! WHY DON'T YOU FALL?
I'D THINK A MAN SUCH AS YOU WOULD PREFER TO PERISH NOW--
--RATHER THAN LIVE ON AS A SLAVE!
AGAIN THE WORD IS SPOKEN--AND THE WIND GROWS HARSHER STILL--
--ITS WHISPERED MOAN BECOMING MORE LIKE A MURMUR--
STOP STRUGGLING, DOCTOR--AND DIE!
IT'S REALLY FOR THE BEST, YOU KNOW!
THINK, HOLLAND--IMAGINE WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE TO EXIST IN MY WORLD--
--A WORLD WHERE MY EVERY WISH WILL BE A COMMAND--A WORLD WHERE ALL HUMANITY SHALL SERVE AS SLAVES TO MY POWER--
AND THE MURMURING GROWS DEEPER-- COMING IN FRUSTRATED HOWLS--
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING
14

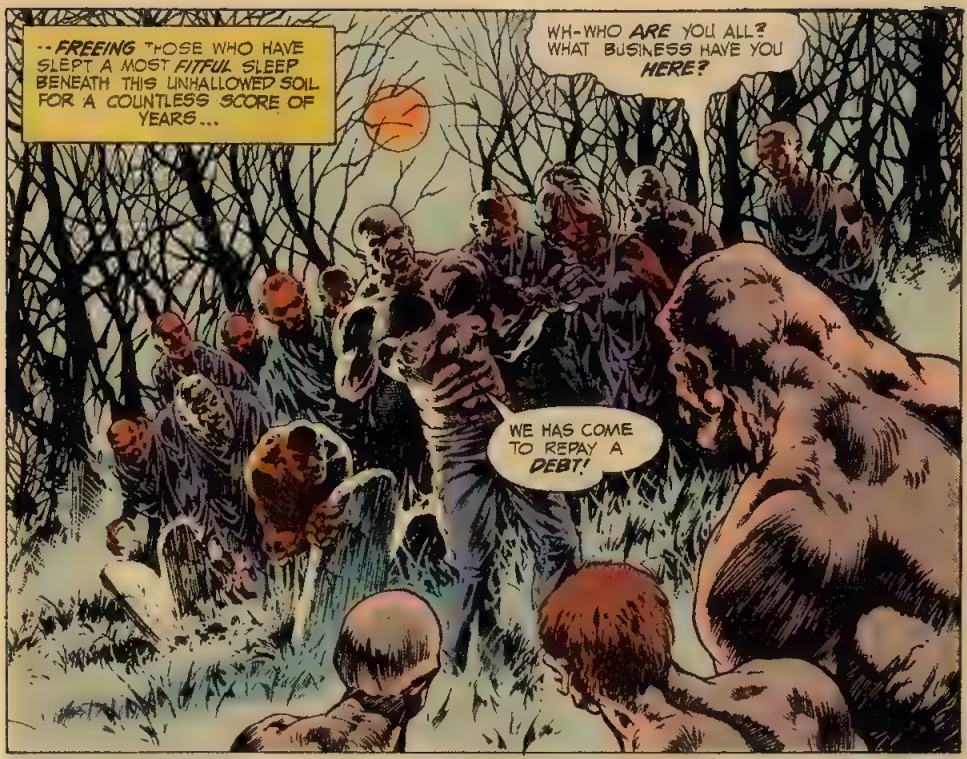

YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOURSELF FORTUNATE, DOCTOR--
--THAT YOU WILL NOT BE AROUND TO SEE SUCH A WORLD!


AND AS THE BARELY-CONSCIOUS SWAMP THING TOPPLES INTO THE DIRT...
IT IS FINISHED, MY PETS!
THE BODY I HAVE SO LONG COVETED WILL SOON BE MINE!
WE NEED ONLY RETURN WITH IT TO MY HIDDEN LABORATORY --TRANSPLANT MY BRAIN INTO ITS MOSSY CONFINES--

--THEN BEGIN A WELL-CALCULATED WAVE OF TERROR THAT WILL EVENTUALLY SWEEP MANKIND'S UNDESERVED FREEDOM FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH--
--AND LEAVE ARCANE THE UNDISPUTED MASTER OF THE WORLD!


AND WITH THAT, THE WINDSWEPT MOANS-- THE GUSTY MURMURINGS--BECOME A MUFFLED CRY OF OUTRAGE AND DESPAIR--

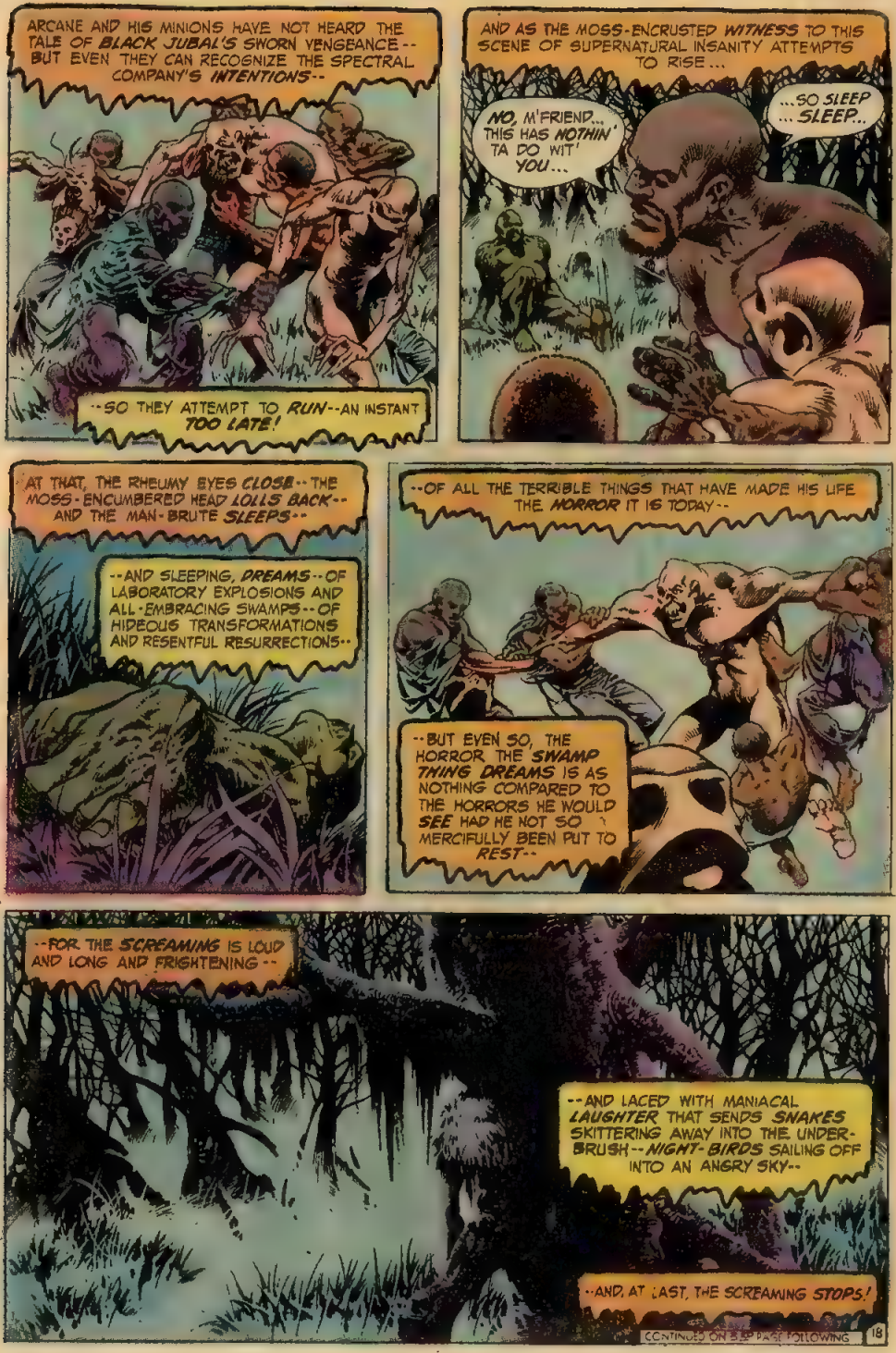
--A SOUND EVEN THE MEGALOMANIACAL ARCANE AND HIS SYNTHETIC SERVANTS CANNOT LONG IGNORE...
THUS THEY STAND TRANSFIXED AS THE MOURNFUL CRY CONGEALS --INTO THE ANGUISHED HYSTERICAL VOICES OF CREATURES NO LONGER TRULY OF THIS WORLD--
--VOICES THAT SCREAM OUT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS REVENGE SO MANY YEARS DENIED THEM--
--AND THE SCREAMING GROWS LOUDER, MORE DESPERATE-- TILL THE ANCIENT WOODEN HEADSTONES SEEM TO SHUDDER AT THE SOUND--
--TREMBLING IN MOCK FEAR OF WHAT THEY KNOW MUST SHORTLY COME...
THEN, A TOMBSTONE FALLS--
--AND ANOTHER QUICKLY FOLLOWS--
--AND, AT LAST, THE MUSTY CEMETERY GROUND ERUPTS IN UNNATURAL FURY--
--HURLING THE REMAINING HEADSTONES SKYWARD--SHRIVELING THE YELLOWED GRASS--SPEWING UP GREAT CHUNKS OF DECAYING DIRT--


--FREEING THOSE WHO HAVE SLEPT A MOST FITFUL SLEEP BENEATH THIS UNHALLOWED SOIL FOR A COUNTLESS SCORE OF YEARS...
WH-WHO ARE YOU ALL? WHAT BUSINESS HAVE YOU HERE?
WE HAS COME TO REPAY A DEBT!

THE BIG BLACK MAN GROWS SILENT THEN--AS HE AND HIS SOMBER COMPANIONS MOVE SLOWLY, HESITANTLY, FORWARD, THEIR DARK EYES ALMOST GLOWING IN ANTICIPATION--

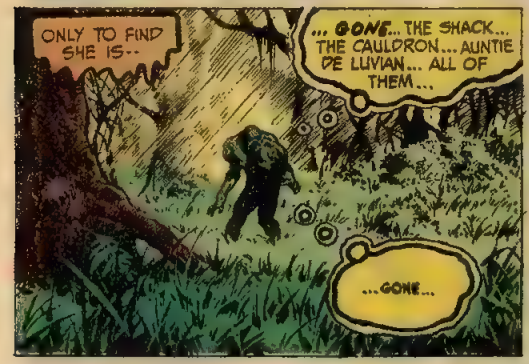
--AND ARCANE, IN TURN, WONDERS IF PERHAPS HIS OWN SYNTHETIC EYES HAVE SUDDENLY GONE FAULTY--FOR HE WOULD SWEAR HE CAN SEE CLEAR THROUGH THE GRIM-VISAGED THRONG APPROACHING HIM--

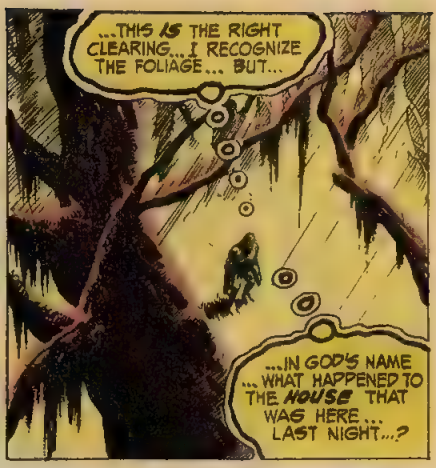
--AND THE SWAMP THING? HIS MOSS-HOODED EYES GO WIDE IN SURPRISE--AS HE REMEMBERS THE TALE HE'D HEARD SCANT MINUTES BEFORE--OF A GREAT BLACK GIANT WHO'D DIED AT THE STAKE--
--A GIANT WITH ONLY ONE ARM!


ARCANE AND HIS MINIONS HAVE NOT HEARD THE TALE OF BLACK JUBAL'S SWORN VENGEANCE -- BUT EVEN THEY CAN RECOGNIZE THE SPECTRAL COMPANY'S INTENTIONS --
--SO THEY ATTEMPT TO RUN--AN INSTANT TOO LATE!
AND AS THE MOSS-ENCRUSTED WITNESS TO THIS SCENE OF SUPERNATURAL INSANITY ATTEMPTS TO RISE ...
NO, M'FRIEND... THIS HAS NOTHIN' TA DO WIT' YOU...
...SO SLEEP ... SLEEP...
AT THAT, THE RHEUMY EYES CLOSE -- THE MOSS-ENCUMBERED HEAD LOLLS BACK -- AND THE MAN-BRUTE SLEEPS --
--AND SLEEPING, DREAMS -- OF LABORATORY EXPLOSIONS AND ALL-EMBRACING SWAMPS -- OF HIDEOUS TRANSFORMATIONS AND RESENTFUL RESURRECTIONS --
--OF ALL THE TERRIBLE THINGS THAT HAVE MADE HIS LIFE THE HORROR IT IS TODAY --
--BUT EVEN SO, THE HORROR THE SWAMP THING DREAMS IS AS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE HORRORS HE WOULD SEE HAD HE NOT SO MERCIFULLY BEEN PUT TO REST --
--FOR THE SCREAMING IS LOUD AND LONG AND FRIGHTENING --
--AND LACED WITH MANIACAL LAUGHTER THAT SENDS SNAKES SKITTERING AWAY INTO THE UNDERBRUSH -- NIGHT-BIRDS SAILING OFF INTO AN ANGRY SKY --
--AND, AT LAST, THE SCREAMING STOPS!
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE FOLLOWING

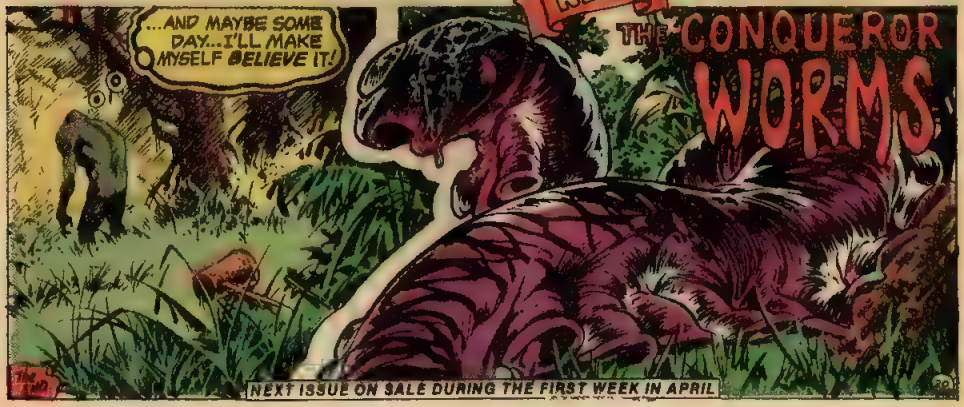
IT IS ALMOST DAWN WHEN THE SWAMP THING AWAKENS, RUBBING THE FILTH OF SLEEP FROM HIS EYES··
--TO FIND HE IS--ALONE!
ARCANE--BLACK JUBAL--THE OTHERS-- ARE GONE, AND THE CENTURIES-OLD CEMETERY IS JUST AS IT WAS BEFORE··
--OR IS IT?
FOR NOW THERE ARE SEVEN NEW HEADSTONES RISING AGAINST THE MIST-- SIX SMALL AND ONE LARGE--
--AND THE SWAMP THING WONDERS IF PERHAPS HE SHOULD WAIT FOR THE RISING SUN TO EXAMINE THIS NEW MYSTERY MORE CLOSELY-
HE WONDERS THIS FOR ONLY AN INSTANT THEN SANITY PREVAILS--
--AND HE TURNS AWAY SHAMBLING OFF INTO THE MISTY HALFLIGHT OF MORNING...
FOR THERE REALLY IS NO NEED FOR HIM TO STAY...
ARCANE
IN HIS HEART, THE SWAMP THING KNOWS WHAT HE WILL FIND!

EPILOGUE: DAWN IS IN FULL BLOOM WHEN THE SHAMBLING SWAMP BRUTE AT LAST FINDS HIS WAY BACK TO THE CLEARING WHERE A CERTAIN ANCIENT WOMAN HAD SAT THE NIGHT BEFORE...





EAGERLY, THE SWAMP THING TEARS THE FOLIAGE ASIDE TO REVEAL...
...A GRAVESTONE... AND THAT INSCRIPTION ..."ELSBETH DE LUVIAN"..
ELSBETH DE LUVIAN
BLACK JUBAL'S ELSBETH, I'M CERTAIN..! SO THAT'S WHY SHE HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO GO...



THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
SWAMP THING
STILL ONLY 20¢
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HOW LONG HE HAS STOOD HERE, GAZING SADLY AT THE RUPTURED RUINS OF THE MOULDERING BARN THAT WAS ONCE HIS PRIVATE LABORATORY. HE CANNOT REMEMBER -- NOR WOULD IT TRULY MATTER IF HE DID--
--FOR THIS SHAMBLING, MUCK-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY OF WHAT ONCE HAD BEEN A MAN IS IN NO RUSH TO GO ANYWHERE ELSE...
IN FACT, HE HAS NOWHERE ELSE TO GO...
SWAMP THING

A LEN WEIN (WRITER) • NESTOR REDONDO (ILLUSTRATOR) • JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION

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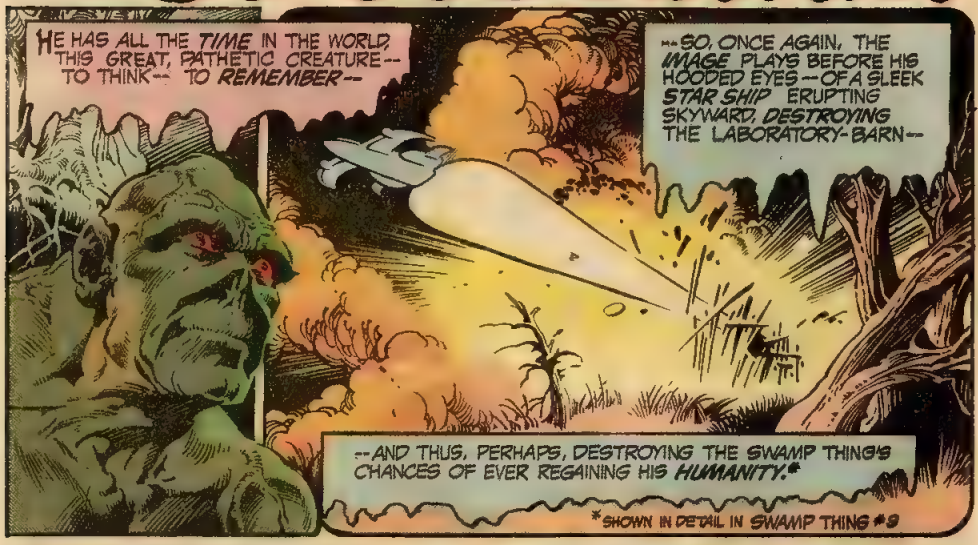
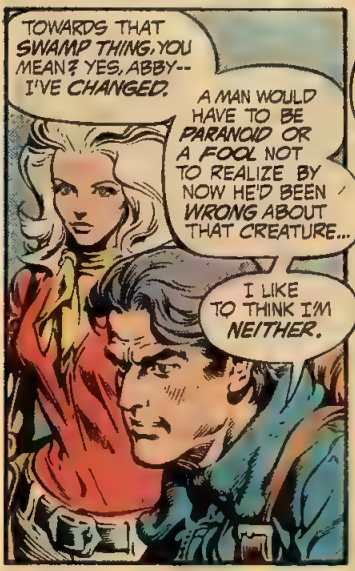
THE CONQUEROR WORMS!

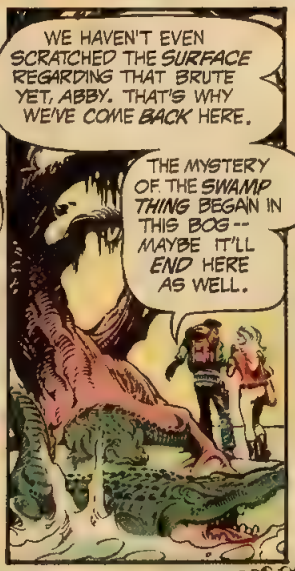

HE HAS ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD, THIS GREAT, PATHETIC CREATURE-- TO THINK-- TO REMEMBER--
--SO, ONCE AGAIN, THE IMAGE PLAYS BEFORE HIS HOODED EYES--OF A SLEEK STAR SHIP ERUPTING SKYWARD, DESTROYING THE LABORATORY-BARN--
--AND THUS, PERHAPS, DESTROYING THE SWAMP THING'S CHANCES OF EVER REGAINING HIS HUMANITY.*
*SHOWN IN DETAIL IN SWAMP THING #9

--UNTIL, AT LAST, UNABLE TO ENDURE THE THOUGHT ANY LONGER, THE MASSIVE MAN-BRUTE TURNS TO LEAVE--
--ONLY TO DISCOVER THAT HE CAN'T!
HUH...? MY LEGS... SOMETHING WRONG WITH THEM...?

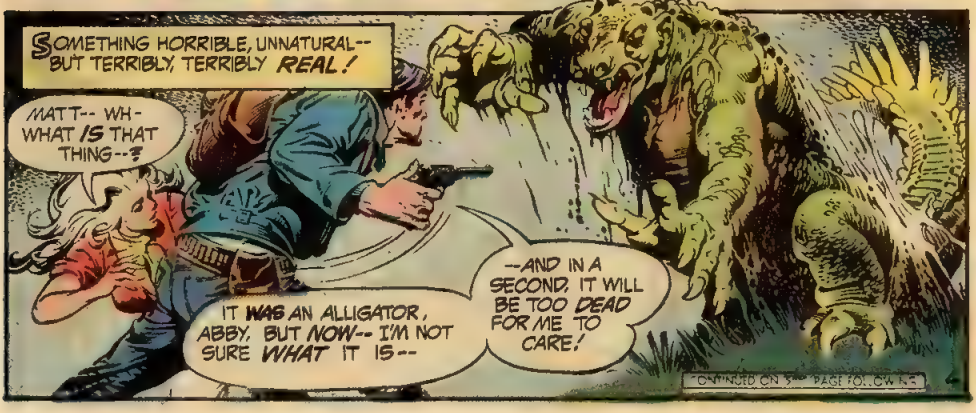
WHY, GOD... WHY DID YOU DO THIS TO ME...?
WHAT TERRIBLE CRIME DID I COMMIT... TO DESERVE A FATE LIKE THIS...?
WHAT KIND OF MONSTER COULD I HAVE BEEN...
THRACKK!
...TO HAVE EARNED THIS HIDEOUS BODY YOU'VE IMPRISONED ME IN...
THRASHH!
...TO HAVE EARNED THE MURDEROUS POWER YOU'VE PLACED IN THESE GNARLED, MISSHAPEN HANDS...?
NO... ON SECOND THOUGHT... DON'T TELL ME...!
I DON'T THINK... I WANT TO KNOW...!

WHILE, NOT VERY FAR AWAY, TWO PEOPLE THE SORROWFUL SWAMP THING KNOWS QUITE WELL MAKE THEIR WAY CAUTIOUSLY ACROSS THE BOG--
--LIEUTENANT MATT CABLE AND THE LOVELY ABIGAIL ARCANE!
EASY, ABBY-- I'D HATE TO HAVE YOU BREAK ANYTHING. IT'S A LONG WAY TO A DOCTOR FROM HERE.
IT MIGHT BE WORTH IT IF THIS TRIP IS SUCCESSFUL!
YOU REALLY HAVE CHANGED YOUR ATTITUDE, MATT... HAVEN'T YOU?


TOWARDS THAT SWAMP THING, YOU MEAN? YES, ABBY-- I'VE CHANGED.
A MAN WOULD HAVE TO BE PARANOID OR A FOOL NOT TO REALIZE BY NOW HE'D BEEN WRONG ABOUT THAT CREATURE...
I LIKE TO THINK I'M NEITHER.


WE HAVEN'T EVEN SCRATCHED THE SURFACE REGARDING THAT BRUTE YET, ABBY. THAT'S WHY WE'VE COME BACK HERE.
THE MYSTERY OF THE SWAMP THING BEGAN IN THIS BOG-- MAYBE IT'LL END HERE AS WELL.

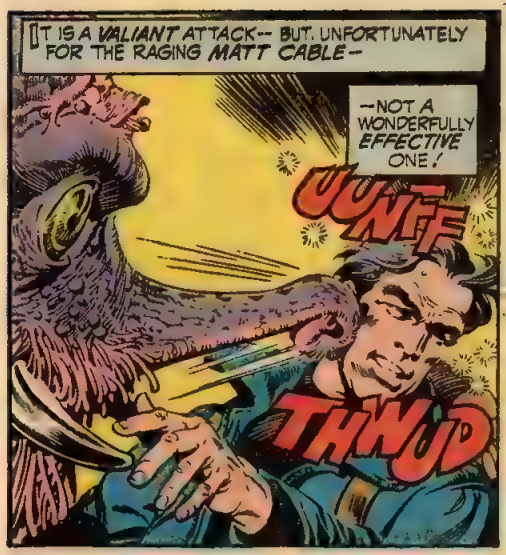
IT WAS RIGHT HERE-- BEHIND ALEC HOLLAND'S OLD LABORATORY-- THAT I FIRST SAW THE CREATURE, SO WE MIGHT AS WELL...
MATT-- LOOK! SOMETHING'S BREAKING THE WATER'S SURFACE--!


SOMETHING HORRIBLE, UNNATURAL-- BUT TERRIBLY, TERRIBLY REAL!
MATT-- WH- WHAT IS THAT THING--?
IT WAS AN ALLIGATOR, ABBY. BUT NOW-- I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT IS--
--AND IN A SECOND, IT WILL BE TOO DEAD FOR ME TO CARE!
CONTINUED ON 5--- PAGE FOLLOWS

DAMN--!
THE BULLETS HAVE NO EFFECT ON THE BEAST!
AAAIEE!
BLAM BLAM BAM
MATT CABLE'S PISTOL HURLS THROUGH THE AIR, BOUNCING HARMLESSLY OFF THE CREATURE'S MOSSY CHEST...
... FURIOUS, THE REPTILIAN MONSTROSITY RAISES IT'S TALONED CLAW TO STRIKE--
--BUT IT IS A BLOW THAT NEVER COMES--
YOU--?
--FOR A MUTATED ALLIGATOR IS NOT THE ONLY MONSTROSITY THAT STALKS THIS STAGNANT MARSH!
THE SWAMP THING--!
AT YOUR SERVICE, MATT...AS ALWAYS...!
I SEEM TO HAVE MADE A CAREER... OUT OF SAVING YOUR LIFE FROM...
UUNFF
BWOKK
5

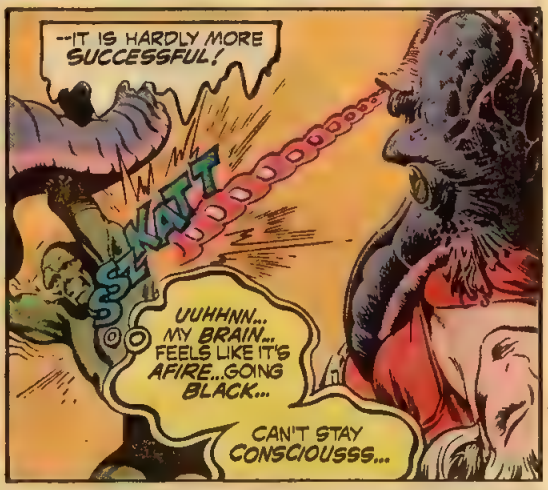
WITH A SIBILANT HISS THAT IS ALMOST A GROWL, THE REPTILIAN MUTATION HURLS ITSELF AT THE SWAMP THING--
--AND THE TWO MOSSY FIGURES DISAPPEAR BENEATH THE BOG--
THE NEXT MOMENTS SEEM LIKE EONS-- AS TWO ANXIOUS SPECTATORS STAND AT THE WATER'S EDGE, WATCHING THE SURFACE ROIL AND FROTH--
--AWAITING A VICTOR--
MATT--PLEASE-- LET'S LEAVE WHILE THERE'S STILL TIME!
NO, ABBY. I WANT TO-- BUT I CAN'T LEAVE TILL I KNOW--!
AND SUDDENLY..
LOOKS LIKE THAT'S ANOTHER ONE YOU OWE ME, MATT...
...AND WHO KNOWS...? MAYBE SOMEDAY... YOU'LL ACTUALLY REPAY ME...!
NO--WAIT-- DON'T GO! I WANT TO HELP YOU--!
HELP ME, MATT...?
THE WAY I FEEL RIGHT NOW.. THE ONLY WAY YOU COULD HELP ME... IS TO KILL ME...!
BUT BEFORE THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MAN-BRUTE CAN SHAMBLE VERY MUCH FARTHER...
EEEEEE
WHAT...? THAT SOUNDED LIKE CABLE'S LADY FRIEND...!
SOMETHING ELSE HAS GONE WRONG BACK THERE...!
6

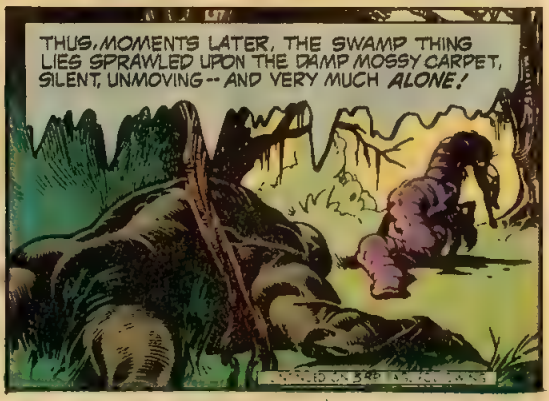
GONE WRONG? PERHAPS GONE INSANE WOULD BE MORE DESCRIPTIVE OF THE SITUATION--
--FOR AS THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND LUMBERS SWIFTLY BACK INTO SIGHT OF HIS FRIENDS, HE IS--FOR AN INSTANT--ALMOST GLAD HE IS NO LONGER HUMAN...
IF HE WAS, THE SPECTACLE HE NOW BEHOLDS WOULD MOST SURELY HAVE CHILLED THE BLOOD IN THOSE MORTAL VEINS...
WORMS... GIANT MUTATIONS OF SOME SORT...! THEY'VE GRABBED THE GIRL...
...AND THAT FOOL CABLE IS ATTACKING THEM...!


IT IS A VALIANT ATTACK-- BUT, UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE RAGING MATT CABLE--
--NOT A WONDERFULLY EFFECTIVE ONE!
UNTF
THWUD

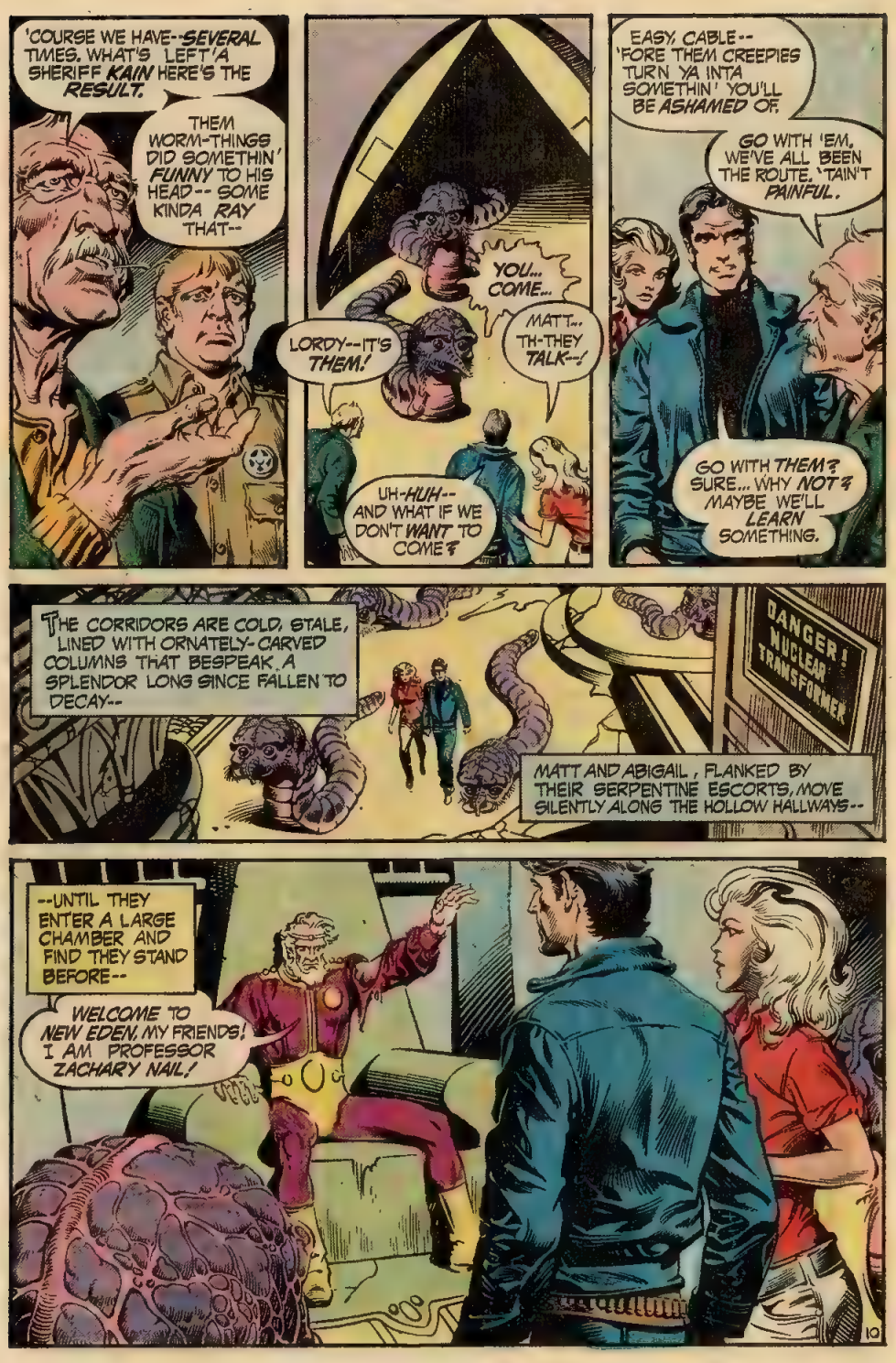
STILL, HIS FRIEND'S UNFORTUNATE EXAMPLE DOES NOT DISCOURAGE A CERTAIN MOSSY MAN-BRUTE FROM LAUNCHING AN ASSAULT OF HIS OWN...
FILTHY NIGHT-CRAWLERS... IF YOU'VE HURT CABLE OR THAT GIRL...

BUT THOUGH THE HULKING MAN-MONSTER'S ATTACK IS INFINITELY MORE VIGOROUS THAN MATT CABLE'S HAD BEEN--
...I'M GOING TO TURN YOU INTO... FISH-BAIT..!


--IT IS HARDLY MORE SUCCESSFUL!
SSKATT
UUHHNN... MY BRAIN... FEELS LIKE IT'S AFIRE...GOING BLACK...
CAN'T STAY CONSCIOUSSS...


THUS, MOMENTS LATER, THE SWAMP THING LIES SPRAWLED UPON THE DAMP MOSSY CARPET, SILENT, UNMOVING -- AND VERY MUCH ALONE!

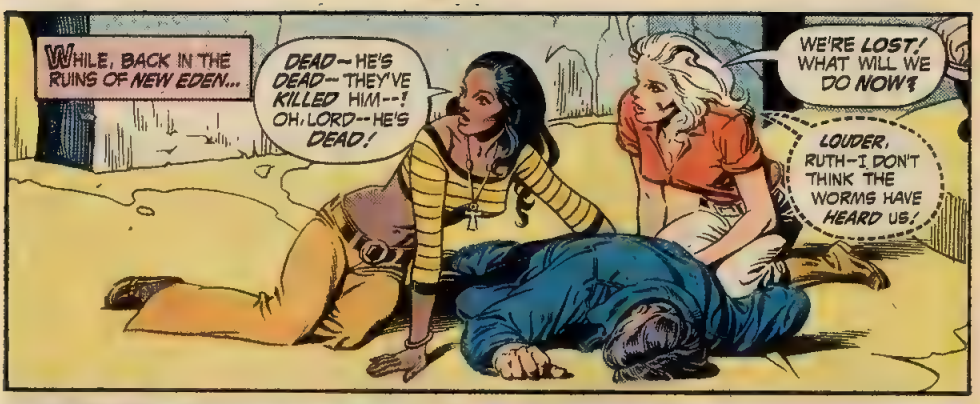
AND SOMETIME LATER...
ABBY--? ABIGAIL, PLEASE--WAKE UP!
EH...? WHA...OH, MATT...IT'S YOU!
WH-WHERE ARE WE?
DON'T KNOW, ABBY--AND I DON'T INTEND TO STICK AROUND AND FIND OUT!
THAT CLOSED DOOR LOOKS LIKE AN EXIT--AND WE'RE GONNA USE IT!
YOU KIN TRY, YOUNG FELLA--BUT YER WASTIN' YER TIME.
WHO--?
HOWDY--NAME'S LUKE. THEM WITH ME'S KAIN... RUTH... AN' BOLT! WELCOME TO OUR LITTLE FAMILY.
WELL--IT SEEMS WE'RE NOT ALONE. I'M CABLE... THE LADY IS ABIGAIL.
WHAT ARE YOU ALL DOING HERE?
SAME AS YOU, I RECKON... WAITING. THEM FUNNY-LOOKIN' WORMS BROUGHT US HERE A FEW DAYS BACK.
AND IN ALL THIS TIME, YOU HAVEN'T TRIED ESCAPING?


'COURSE WE HAVE--SEVERAL TIMES. WHAT'S LEFT'A SHERIFF KAIN HERE'S THE RESULT.
THEM WORM-THINGS DID SOMETHIN' FUNNY TO HIS HEAD-- SOME KINDA RAY THAT--
LORDY--IT'S THEM!
YOU... COME...
MATT... TH-THEY TALK--!
UH-HUH-- AND WHAT IF WE DON'T WANT TO COME?
EASY, CABLE-- 'FORE THEM CREEPIES TURN YA INTA SOMETHIN' YOU'LL BE ASHAMED OF.
GO WITH 'EM, WE'VE ALL BEEN THE ROUTE. 'TAIN'T PAINFUL.
GO WITH THEM? SURE... WHY NOT? MAYBE WE'LL LEARN SOMETHING.
THE CORRIDORS ARE COLD, STALE, LINED WITH ORNATELY-CARVED COLUMNS THAT BESPEAK A SPLENDOR LONG SINCE FALLEN TO DECAY--
DANGER! NUCLEAR TRANSFORMER
MATT AND ABIGAIL, FLANKED BY THEIR SERPENTINE ESCORTS, MOVE SILENTLY ALONG THE HOLLOW HALLWAYS--
--UNTIL THEY ENTER A LARGE CHAMBER AND FIND THEY STAND BEFORE--
WELCOME TO NEW EDEN, MY FRIENDS! I AM PROFESSOR ZACHARY NAIL!
10

YOU ARE OF COURSE WONDERING WHY I'VE BROUGHT YOU HERE, MY FRIENDS! LISTEN WELL -- AND I SHALL TELL YOU...
"I CONSTRUCTED NEW EDEN IN THE HEART OF THIS FETID SWAMPLAND AS A SELF-SUFFICIENT HAVEN FROM THE POLLUTION THAT RAVAGES THE WORLD OUTSIDE..."
"CAREFULLY, I COLLECTED STRONG, YOUNG PEOPLE TO BE THE BACKBONE OF MY NEW SOCIETY -- AND MY PLANS WENT WELL --
"-- UNTIL DR. THIRTEEN, THE ACCURSED GHOST-BREAKER,* INTERFERED"...
*AS DETAILED IN PHANTOM STRANGER #14, "SPECTRE OF THE STALKING SWAMP" -- EDITOR
"SOMEHOW, THE WASTE FROM MY ATOMIC MOTORS AFFECTED THE PLANTLIFE OUTSIDE AND, AS DR. THIRTEEN AND THE OTHERS ESCAPED, A WAVE OF ALGAE ALMOST CRUSHED MY DOME --
-- IT'S VERY WEIGHT FORCING THE DOME TO SINK LOWER AND LOWER BENEATH THE STAGNANT SWAMP OOZE..."
"I ALONE REMAINED WITHIN -- AND HOW LONG I LAY AS ONE DEAD BEFORE MY WORM-LIKE SERVANTS DISCOVERED ME, I DO NOT KNOW --
"-- BUT DISCOVER ME THEY DID -- AND NURSED ME TO HEALTH -- AND MADE ME THEIR LEADER..."
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

THEY ARE MOST INTELLIGENT, MY NEW SUBJECTS--THE SOLE SURVIVORS OF A RACE THAT PERISHED LONG BEFORE MANKIND WAS BORN--
--AND WHO, PERHAPS, WILL BE HERE STILL AFTER MANKIND IS GONE!
THAT IS WHY I'VE SENT THEM OUTSIDE TO GATHER PEOPLE SUCH AS YOU--SO THAT SOME SMALL SMATTERING OF MAN WILL SURVIVE WHEN HIS POLLUTION HAS DESTROYED HIS WORLD!
WILL YOU JOIN ME IN THIS GREAT VENTURE?
MISTER, YOU ARE OUT OF YOUR MIND!
THAT'S WHAT THE OTHERS SAID--BUT THEY TOO WERE WRONG!
YOU WILL STAY--AND YOU WILL HELP ME SAVE HUMANITY DESPITE ITSELF!
NOW GO! I WILL CALL FOR YOU WHEN YOU'RE NEEDED!
AND, SOMEWHERE FAR ABOVE THE HAPLESS COUPLE, A FAMILIAR MOSSY MONSTROSITY AT LAST STRUGGLES BACK TO AWARENESS, ONLY TO FIND...
CABLE... THE GIRL... THE WORMS... ALL GONE...
...BUT NOT WITHOUT A TRACE... IT SEEMS...!
THOSE NIGHT-CRAWLERS HAVE LEFT A BRACKISH TRAIL IN PASSING...
...AND IT'S A TRAIL I'D BETTER FOLLOW...
...WHEREVER IT MIGHT LEAD...!

MET THE BOSS-MAN, HUH? SQUIRRELLY JASPER, AIN'T HE?
HE'S MORE THAN THAT, FRIEND. HE'S A NUT WITH THE POWER TO CARRY OUT HIS PLANS--
--AND THAT MAKES HIM DANGEROUS!
SO TELL US SOMETHING WE DON'T KNOW, MISTER--LIKE HOW TO GET OUTTA THIS MADHOUSE!
I'VE ALREADY WORKED IT OUT ON THE WALK BACK--BUT TO ACCOMPLISH THAT--
ONE OF US HAS TO DIE!
MATT, YOU--YOU DON'T MEAN THAT--?
OF COURSE I DON'T, ABBY--NOT REALLY--
--BUT I FIGURE THE ONLY WAY TO GET THAT BLASTED DOOR OPEN IS FOR ONE OF US TO PLAY DEAD!
OUR LIVES ARE VERY IMPORTANT TO NAIL! I'M BETTING IT'LL UPSET THE HELL OUT OF HIS WORM FRIENDS IF ONE OF US GETS "WASTED"!
NOW COME ON AND HELP ME DIG UP SOME SORT OF WEAPONS!
WE'VE GOT A BUSY NIGHT AHEAD OF US!
I JEST HOPE IT AIN'T A FATAL ONE!
ELSEWHERE...
LIGHT... UP AHEAD...! SEEMS I'VE ALMOST REACHED MY DESTINATION!
13


WHILE, BACK IN THE RUINS OF NEW EDEN...
DEAD--HE'S DEAD--THEY'VE KILLED HIM--! OH, LORD--HE'S DEAD!
WE'RE LOST! WHAT WILL WE DO NOW?
LOUDER, RUTH--I DON'T THINK THE WORMS HAVE HEARD US!

BUT THE GREAT NIGHT-CRAWLERS HAVE HEARD THE STRIDENT CRIES--AND ANSWERED...
WHAT... IS... WRONG...?
YOU MONSTERS--YOU'VE BROKEN MATT'S BACK! YOU'VE KILLED HIM!
HERE! SEE FOR YOURSELF!

BUT AS THE VILE-SMELLING CREATURE SLITHERS CLOSER TO THE SPRAWLED, STILL FIGURE...
YOU WANT TO SEE SOMETHING, UGLY?
THEN TAKE A CLOSE LOOK AT--THIS!
THWUCK

REELING IN AGONY, THE SERPENTINE MONSTER SCREAMS--A SOUND SO HIDEOUS, IT COULD MAKE A MAN WEEP--
--BUT THE MEN CALLED LUKE AND BOLT HAVE NO TIME FOR TEARS--AS THEY FINISH THE JOB MATT CABLE HAD BEGUN--
DIE, YOU GREAT BIG UGLY--DIE!

--AND WHEN THE WORM-THING, AT LAST, LIES LIFELESS IN THE DUST...
COME ON! LET'S GET GOING--FAST!
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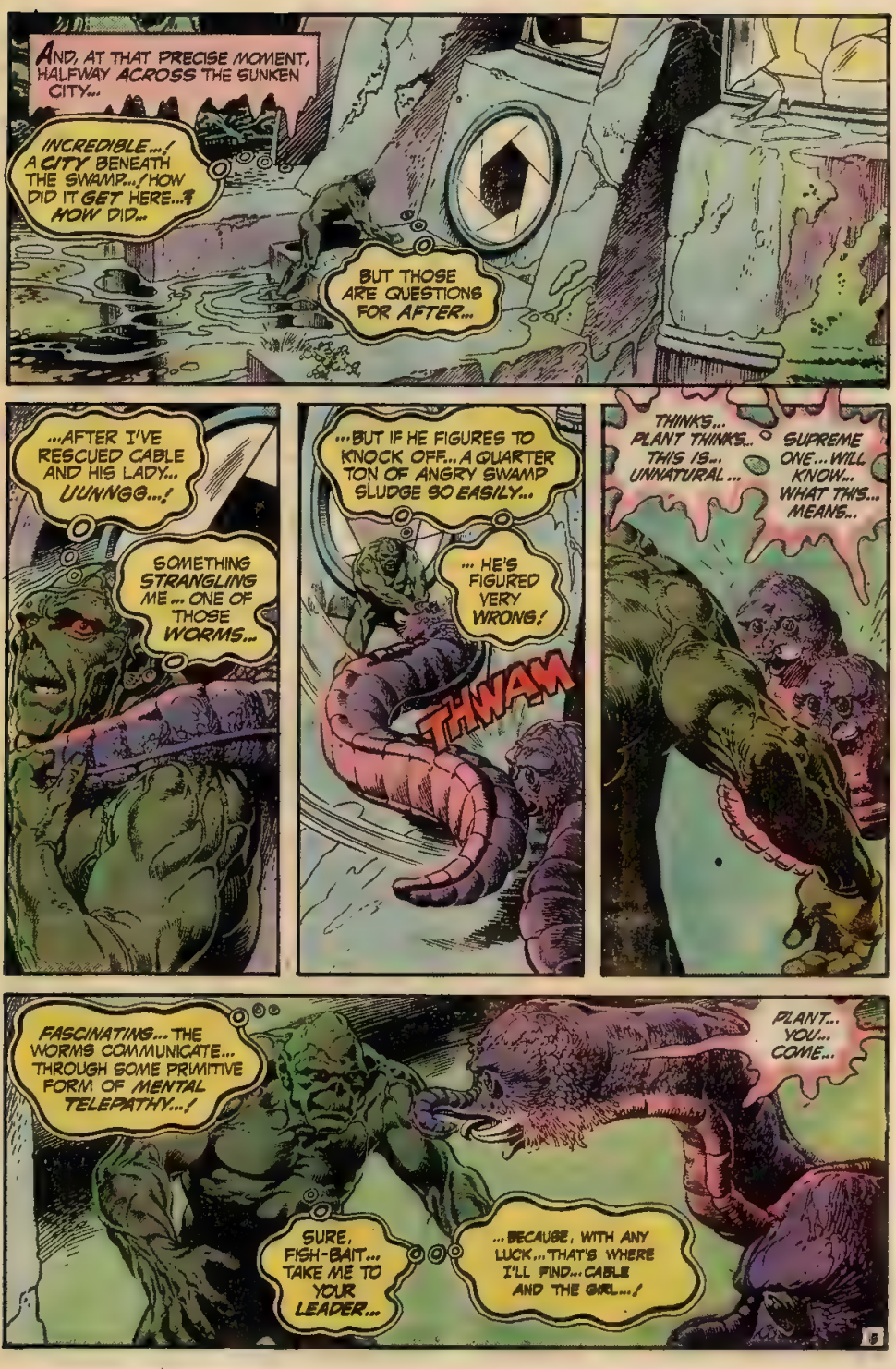
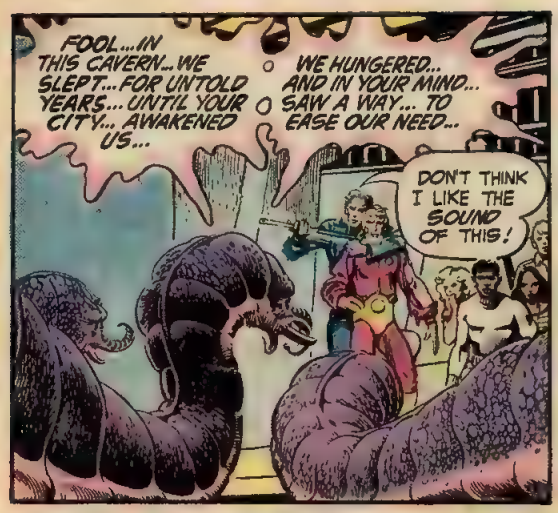

AND, AT THAT PRECISE MOMENT, HALFWAY ACROSS THE SUNKEN CITY...
INCREDIBLE...! A CITY BENEATH THE SWAMP...! HOW DID IT GET HERE...? HOW DID...
BUT THOSE ARE QUESTIONS FOR AFTER...
...AFTER I'VE RESCUED CABLE AND HIS LADY... UUNNGG...!
SOMETHING STRANGLING ME... ONE OF THOSE WORMS...
...BUT IF HE FIGURES TO KNOCK OFF... A QUARTER TON OF ANGRY SWAMP SLUDGE SO EASILY...
... HE'S FIGURED VERY WRONG!
THWAM
THINKS... PLANT THINKS... THIS IS... UNNATURAL...
SUPREME ONE... WILL KNOW... WHAT THIS... MEANS...
FASCINATING... THE WORMS COMMUNICATE... THROUGH SOME PRIMITIVE FORM OF MENTAL TELEPATHY...!
PLANT... YOU... COME...
SURE, FISH-BAIT... TAKE ME TO YOUR LEADER...
...BECAUSE, WITH ANY LUCK... THAT'S WHERE I'LL FIND... CABLE AND THE GIRL...!

AT THE MOMENT, THOUGH, THE MAN CALLED ZACHARY NAIL SEEMS VERY MUCH ALONE...
IT'S AS THE POET SAID, MY FAITHFUL ONE -- UNEASY RESTS THE HEAD THAT WEARS THE CROWN.'
I SEEK TO SAVE WHAT SMALL PIECE OF HUMANITY I CAN-- AND I AM TURNED UPON BY--
-- M-MY FRIENDS--?! WH-WHAT IS THE MEANING OF THIS?
YOU JUST HANG ON A SECOND, MADMAN, AND THE MEANING WILL BECOME QUITE CLEAR!
IN OTHER WORDS, PROFESSOR: WE HAVE MET THE ENEMY--AND HE IS OURS!
PLEASE--NO! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? YOU'RE KILLING AN INNOCENT CREATURE!
SURE--'BOUT AS INNOCENT AS SIMON LEGREE!
SUDDENLY, INTO THE DECAYING CHAMBER THERE BURST--
MORE OF YOUR SLIMY SERVANTS! NAIL, YOU'D BETTER ORDER THEM TO SURRENDER-- OR YOU WON'T LIVE TO REGRET IT!
P-P-PLEASE, MY FAITHFUL ONES-- FOR THE SAKE OF HIM YOU FOLLOW-- DO AS THIS YOUNG FOOL SAYS-- I BESEECH YOU!
FOOL... WE... DO NOT... FOLLOW YOU...
WE ONLY... USE YOU...
WHAT--? I--I DON'T UNDERSTAND--!

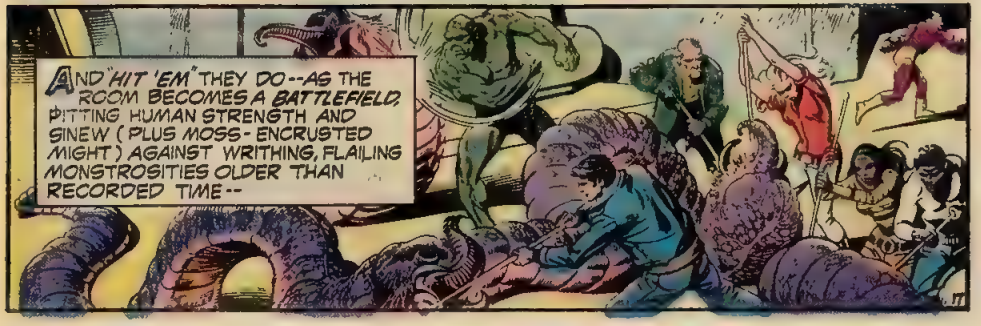

FOOL...IN THIS CAVERN...WE SLEPT...FOR UNTOLD YEARS...UNTIL YOUR CITY...AWAKENED US...
WE HUNGERED...AND IN YOUR MIND...SAW A WAY...TO EASE OUR NEED...
DON'T THINK I LIKE THE SOUND OF THIS!

OUR GOALS...WERE THE SAME...YOU WANTED TO SAVE...MAN...SO DID WE...
...ONLY OUR REASONS WERE DIFFERENT...

YOU WISHED...TO PRESERVE...MAN'S KNOWLEDGE...HIS SPIRIT...
WE...WISHED TO PRESERVE...MAN'S BODY...FOR FOOD...
NO!!

MANKIND COULD NOT HAVE COME ALL THE WAY...FOR ALL THESE YEARS...ONLY TO END UP AS...WORM-FOOD...!
WHAT IN THUNDERATION IS--THAT?
THE SWAMP THINGS--COME AGAIN TO HELP US--!

BUT HE'LL NEVER SUCCEED--UNLESS WE HELP HIM IN TURN!
C'MON, PEOPLE--CHOOSE YOUR TARGETS--AND HIT 'EM!


AND "HIT 'EM" THEY DO--AS THE ROOM BECOMES A BATTLEFIELD, PITTING HUMAN STRENGTH AND SINEW (PLUS MOSS-ENCRUSTED MIGHT) AGAINST WRITHING, FLAILING MONSTROSITIES OLDER THAN RECORDED TIME--

--UNTIL, AT LAST, A HANDFUL OF BATTLE-WEARY FIGURES STAGGER FROM THE BLOOD-DRENCHED CHAMBER, AS...
THIS DOOR OUGHT TO HOLD WHAT'S LEFT OF THOSE WORMS... TILL WE CAN ALL GET OUT OF HERE!
HEY-- WHERE'S NAIL? WE'RE NOT GOING ANYPLACE WITHOUT HIM!
SCATTER AND SEARCH -AND SHOUT IF YOU FIND HIM!
LIES--ALL LIES! I TRIED TO GIVE THEM THE WORLD AND THEY LAUGHED AT ME-- SCORNED ME--
WELL, NOBODY WILL EVER LAUGH AT ZACHARY NAIL AGAIN--!
PROFESSOR NAIL--WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
PLEASE, PROFESSOR-- COME WITH US. WE WANT TO HELP-- UUNNG!
NO--YOU WON'T STOP ME! I WON'T LET YOU--
BLAM BLAM BLAM
AND THE SOUND OF THE GUNSHOTS BRINGS...
DAMNED MANIAC-- YOU KILLED HER-- KILLED THE ONLY WOMAN I'VE EVER LOVED--!
SORRY-- CAN'T TALK NOW-- NO TIME TO TALK--!
I'M GONNA KILL YOU WITH MY BARE HANDS, YOU LOUSY, CRAZY-- HUH?
LEAVE GO OF ME! LET GO BEFORE I...
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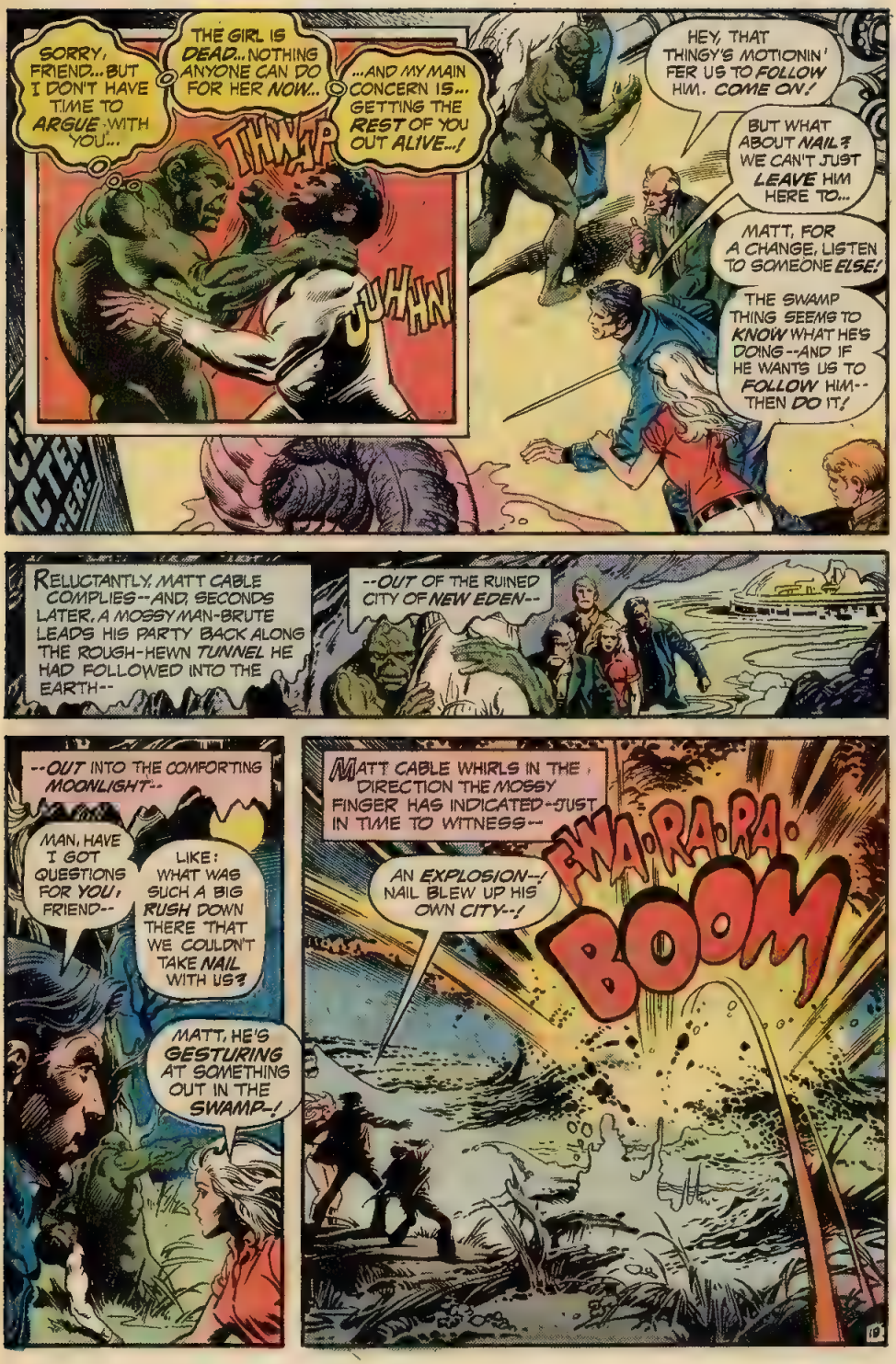
18


SORRY, FRIEND... BUT I DON'T HAVE TIME TO ARGUE WITH YOU...
THE GIRL IS DEAD... NOTHING ANYONE CAN DO FOR HER NOW...
...AND MY MAIN CONCERN IS... GETTING THE REST OF YOU OUT ALIVE...!
THWAP
JUKHN
HEY, THAT THINGY'S MOTIONIN' FER US TO FOLLOW HIM. COME ON!
BUT WHAT ABOUT NAIL? WE CAN'T JUST LEAVE HIM HERE TO...
MATT, FOR A CHANGE, LISTEN TO SOMEONE ELSE!
THE SWAMP THING SEEMS TO KNOW WHAT HE'S DOING--AND IF HE WANTS US TO FOLLOW HIM-- THEN DO IT!
RELUCTANTLY, MATT CABLE COMPLIES--AND, SECONDS LATER, A MOSSY MAN-BRUTE LEADS HIS PARTY BACK ALONG THE ROUGH-HEWN TUNNEL HE HAD FOLLOWED INTO THE EARTH--
--OUT OF THE RUINED CITY OF NEW EDEN--
--OUT INTO THE COMFORTING MOONLIGHT--
MAN, HAVE I GOT QUESTIONS FOR YOU, FRIEND--
LIKE: WHAT WAS SUCH A BIG RUSH DOWN THERE THAT WE COULDN'T TAKE NAIL WITH US?
MATT, HE'S GESTURING AT SOMETHING OUT IN THE SWAMP--!
MATT CABLE WHIRLS IN THE DIRECTION THE MOSSY FINGER HAS INDICATED--JUST IN TIME TO WITNESS--
AN EXPLOSION--! NAIL BLEW UP HIS OWN CITY--!
FWA-RA-RA-BOOM
10

AND WHEN THE EARTH HAS AT LAST STOPPED TREMBLING...
WH-WHERE AM I? WHAT HAPPENED? WHERE'S RUTH? WHERE'S NAIL?
WHERE HE CAN NEVER HURT ANYONE AGAIN, BOLT.
HE WAS TAMPERING WITH HIS OWN NUCLEAR REACTOR WHEN RUTH FOUND HIM. NEW EDEN IMPLODED JUST AFTER THE SWAMP THING GOT US OUT OF--
HEY--THE SWAMP THING IS GONE! BUT WE'LL FIND HIM AGAIN--WE HAVE TO!
AND YOU AIN'T GONNA BE THE ONLY ONE LOOKING, CABLE! I GOT ME A SCORE TO SETTLE WITH THAT MOSSY GREEN UGLY--A BIG SCORE!
ADDENDUM: LATER THAT NIGHT, DEEP IN THE BAYOU'S HEART...
SORRY I COULDN'T STAY WITH CABLE AND THE OTHERS BUT... EH...?
SOMETHING GLOWING IN THE UNDERBRUSH AHEAD.
AND THE UNDERBRUSH IS PULLED BACK TO REVEAL...
A JEWEL... AT LEAST, IT LOOKS LIKE A JEWEL... THE BIGGEST I'VE EVER SEEN...
...WITH A SEVEN-POINTED STAR CARVED ON ITS FACE...
THE SWAMP THING'S ROOT-GNARLED FINGERS BRUSH THE GEMSTONE'S FACE--AND, SUDDENLY, THE WORLD ERUPTS INTO AGONY AND KALEIDOSCOPIC COLORS...
--AND WHEN THE WRITHING RAINBOW FADES, THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE FINDS HE HAS STEPPED INTO A-- NIGHTMARE!
NEXT ISSUE: THE ETERNITY MAN--!
ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN JUNE

THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
SWAMP THING
STILL ONLY 20¢
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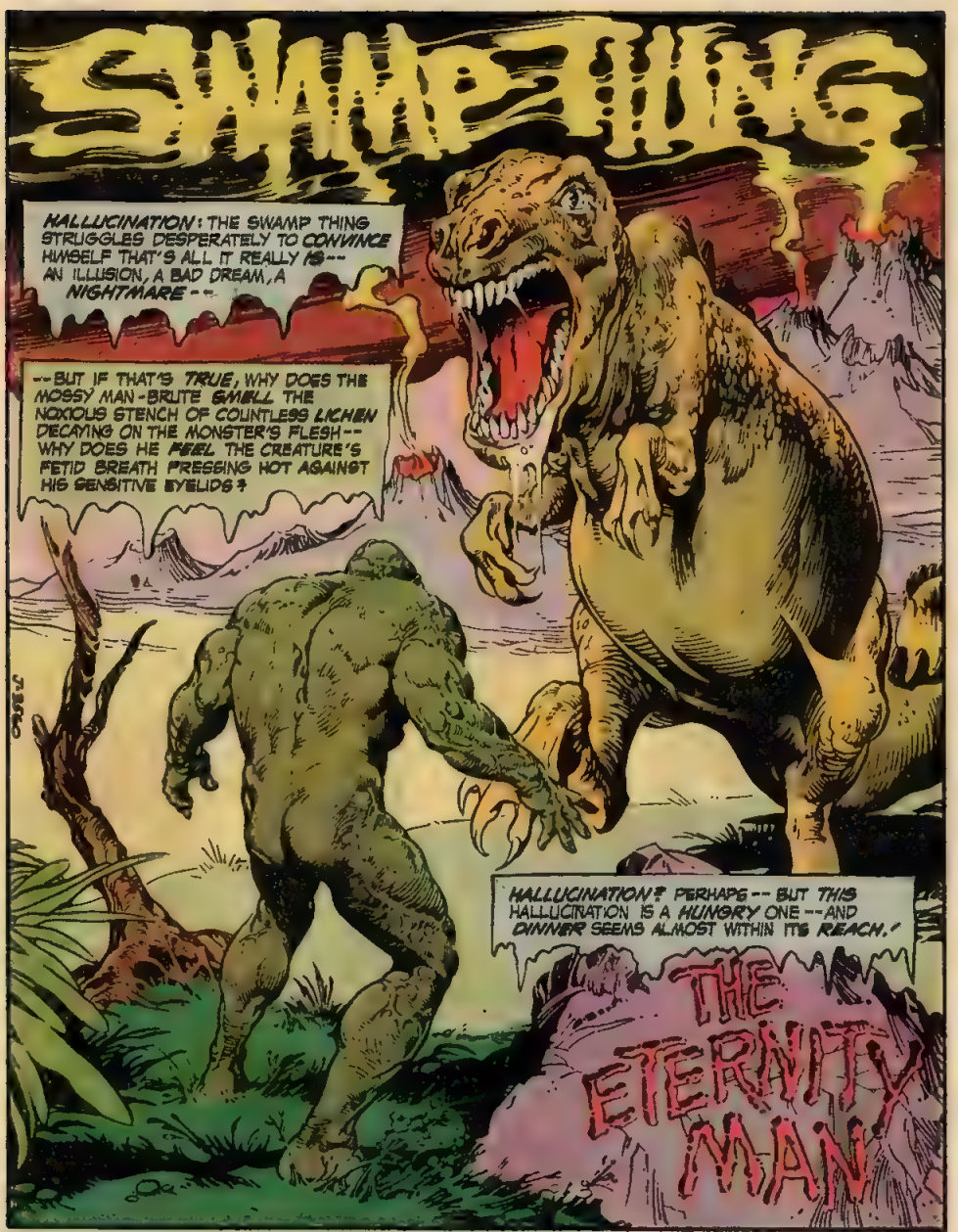
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY


SWAMP THING
HALLUCINATION: THE SWAMP THING STRUGGLES DESPERATELY TO CONVINCE HIMSELF THAT'S ALL IT REALLY IS--- AN ILLUSION, A BAD DREAM, A NIGHTMARE---
--BUT IF THAT'S TRUE, WHY DOES THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE SMELL THE NOXIOUS STENCH OF COUNTLESS LICHEN DECAYING ON THE MONSTER'S FLESH-- WHY DOES HE FEEL THE CREATURE'S FETID BREATH PRESSING HOT AGAINST HIS SENSITIVE EYELIDS?
HALLUCINATION? PERHAPS -- BUT THIS HALLUCINATION IS A HUNGRY ONE --AND DINNER SEEMS ALMOST WITHIN ITS REACH.'
THE ETERNITY MAN

A LEN WEIN - NESTOR REDONDO - JOE ORLANDO PRESENTATION
WRITER ILLUSTRATOR EDITOR

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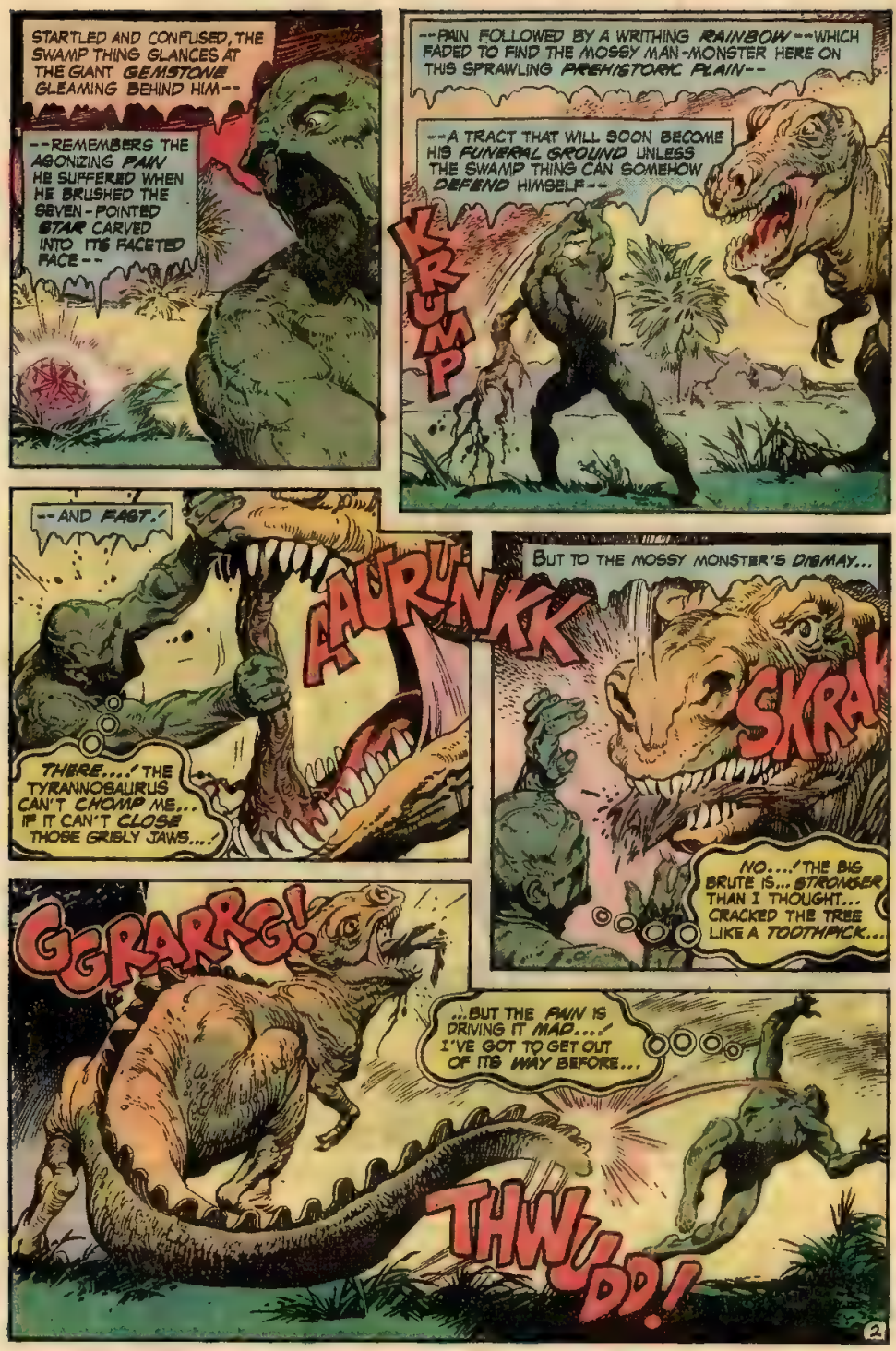
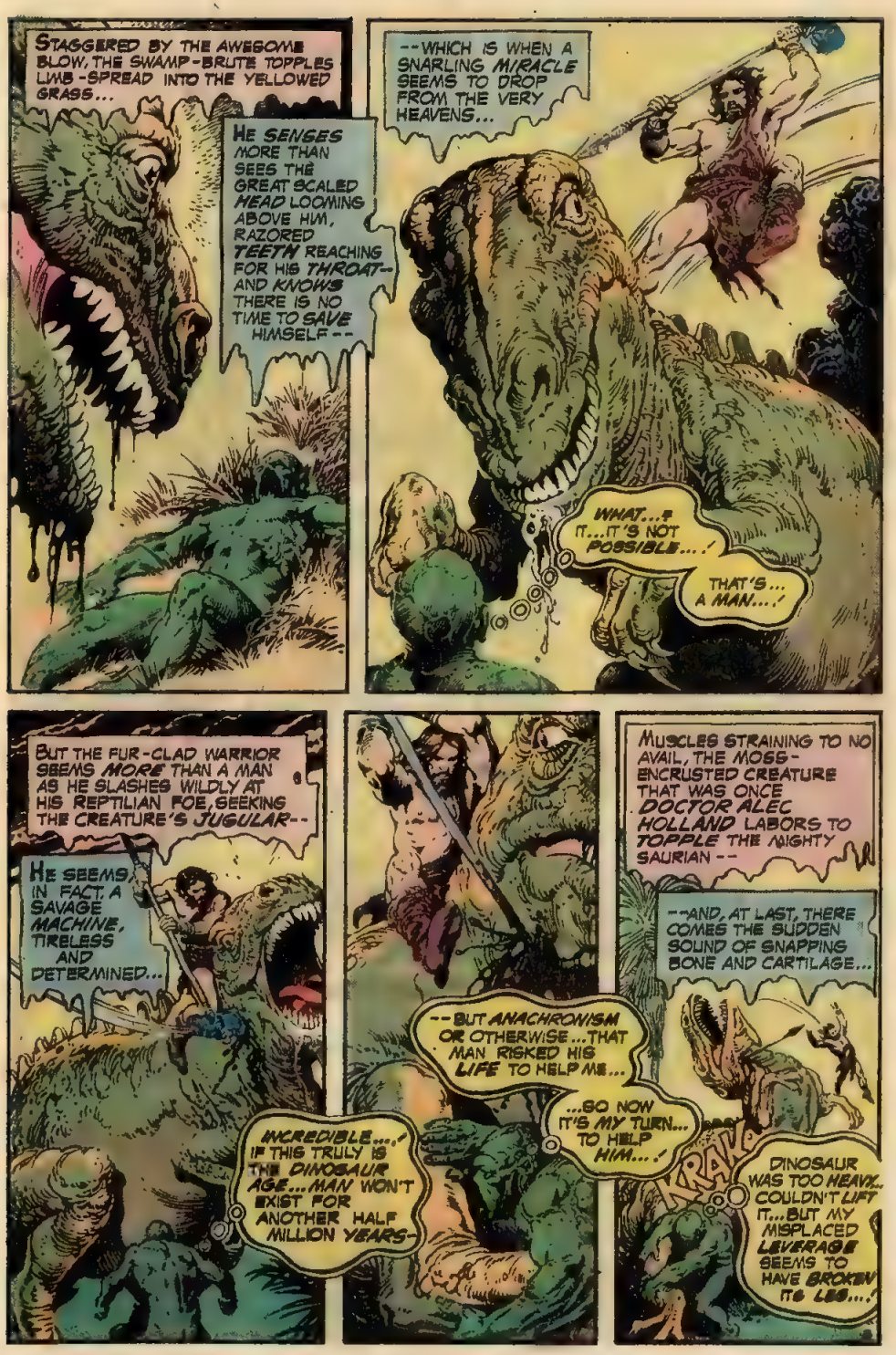
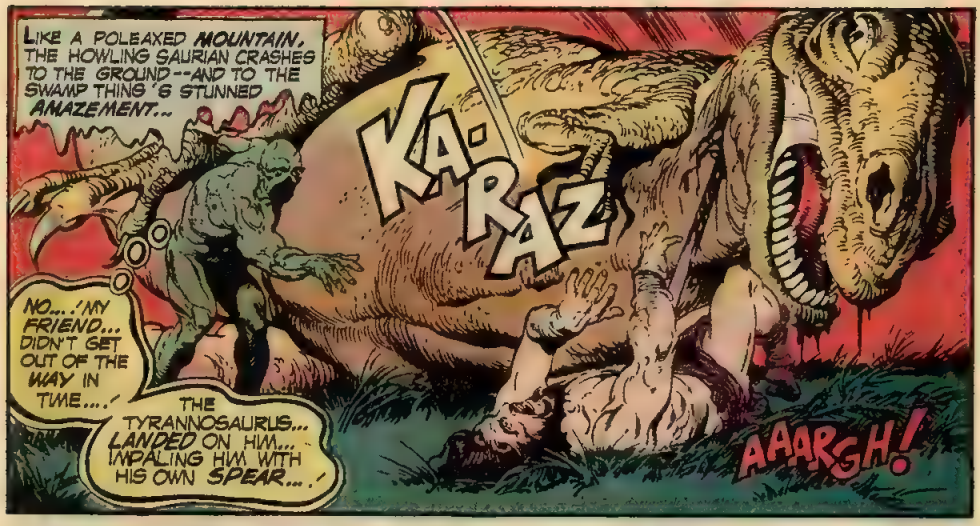
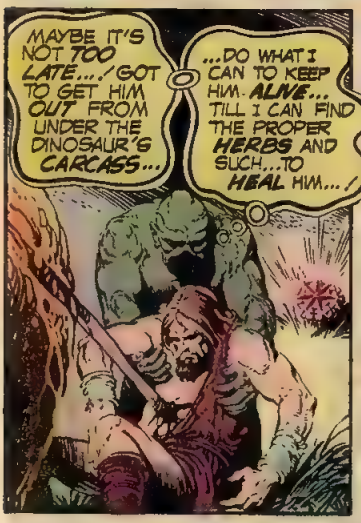
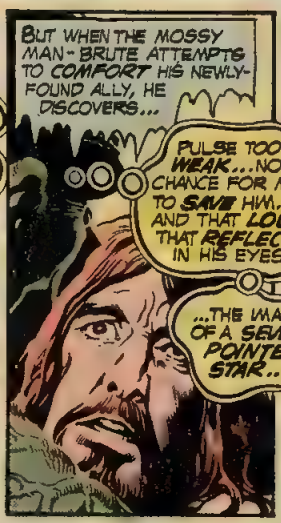
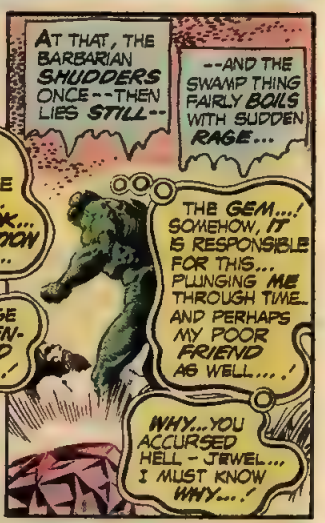

STARTLED AND CONFUSED, THE SWAMP THING GLANCES AT THE GIANT GEMSTONE GLEAMING BEHIND HIM--
--REMEMBERS THE AGONIZING PAIN HE SUFFERED WHEN HE BRUSHED THE SEVEN-POINTED STAR CARVED INTO ITS FACETED FACE--
--PAIN FOLLOWED BY A WRITHING RAINBOW--WHICH FADED TO FIND THE MOSSY MAN-MONSTER HERE ON THIS SPRAWLING PREHISTORIC PLAIN--
--A TRACT THAT WILL SOON BECOME HIS FUNERAL GROUND UNLESS THE SWAMP THING CAN SOMEHOW DEFEND HIMSELF--
KRUMP
--AND FAST.'
AAURUNKK
THERE....' THE TYRANNOSAURUS CAN'T CHOMP ME... IF IT CAN'T CLOSE THOSE GRISLY JAWS....'
BUT TO THE MOSSY MONSTER'S DISMAY...
SKRAK
NO....' THE BIG BRUTE IS... STRONGER THAN I THOUGHT... CRACKED THE TREE LIKE A TOOTHPICK...
GGRARRG!
...BUT THE PAIN IS DRIVING IT MAD....' I'VE GOT TO GET OUT OF ITS WAY BEFORE...
THWUDD!
2

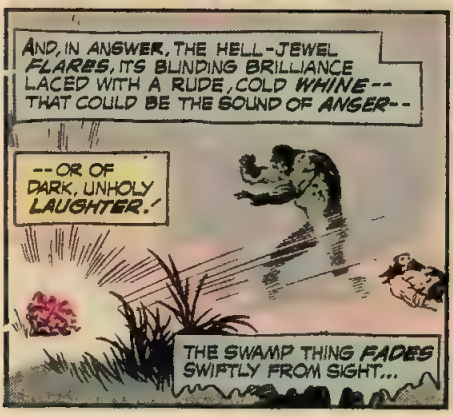

STAGGERED BY THE AWESOME BLOW, THE SWAMP-BRUTE TOPPLES LIMB-SPREAD INTO THE YELLOWED GRASS...
HE SENSES MORE THAN SEES THE GREAT SCALED HEAD LOOMING ABOVE HIM, RAZORED TEETH REACHING FOR HIS THROAT--AND KNOWS THERE IS NO TIME TO SAVE HIMSELF--
--WHICH IS WHEN A SNARLING MIRACLE SEEMS TO DROP FROM THE VERY HEAVENS...
WHAT...? IT...IT'S NOT POSSIBLE...!
THAT'S... A MAN...!
BUT THE FUR-CLAD WARRIOR SEEMS MORE THAN A MAN AS HE SLASHES WILDLY AT HIS REPTILIAN FOE, SEEKING THE CREATURE'S JUGULAR--
HE SEEMS, IN FACT, A SAVAGE MACHINE, TIRELESS AND DETERMINED...
INCREDIBLE...! IF THIS TRULY IS THE DINOSAUR AGE...MAN WON'T EXIST FOR ANOTHER HALF MILLION YEARS-
--BUT ANACHRONISM OR OTHERWISE...THAT MAN RISKED HIS LIFE TO HELP ME...
...SO NOW IT'S MY TURN... TO HELP HIM...!
MUSCLES STRAINING TO NO AVAIL, THE MOSS-ENCRUSTED CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND LABORS TO TOPPLE THE MIGHTY SAURIAN --
--AND, AT LAST, THERE COMES THE SUDDEN SOUND OF SNAPPING BONE AND CARTILAGE...
KRAK
DINOSAUR WAS TOO HEAVY... COULDN'T LIFT IT...BUT MY MISPLACED LEVERAGE SEEMS TO HAVE BROKEN ITS LEG...!

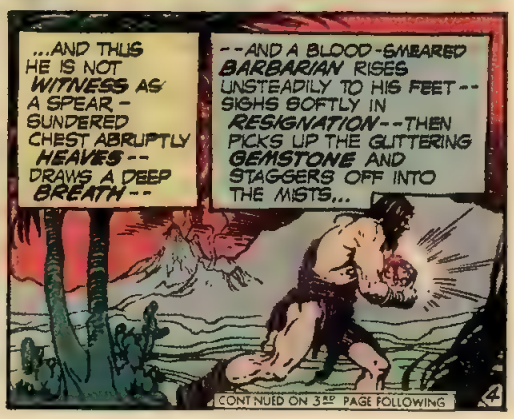

LIKE A POLEAXED MOUNTAIN, THE HOWLING SAURIAN CRASHES TO THE GROUND--AND TO THE SWAMP THING'S STUNNED AMAZEMENT...
KA-RAZ!
NO...! MY FRIEND... DIDN'T GET OUT OF THE WAY IN TIME...!
THE TYRANNOSAURUS... LANDED ON HIM... IMPALING HIM WITH HIS OWN SPEAR...!
AAARGH!


MAYBE IT'S NOT TOO LATE...! GOT TO GET HIM OUT FROM UNDER THE DINOSAUR'S CARCASS...
...DO WHAT I CAN TO KEEP HIM ALIVE... TILL I CAN FIND THE PROPER HERBS AND SUCH...TO HEAL HIM...!


BUT WHEN THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE ATTEMPTS TO COMFORT HIS NEWLY-FOUND ALLY, HE DISCOVERS...
PULSE TOO WEAK...NO CHANCE FOR ME TO SAVE HIM... AND THAT LOOK... THAT REFLECTION IN HIS EYES...
...THE IMAGE OF A SEVEN-POINTED STAR...!

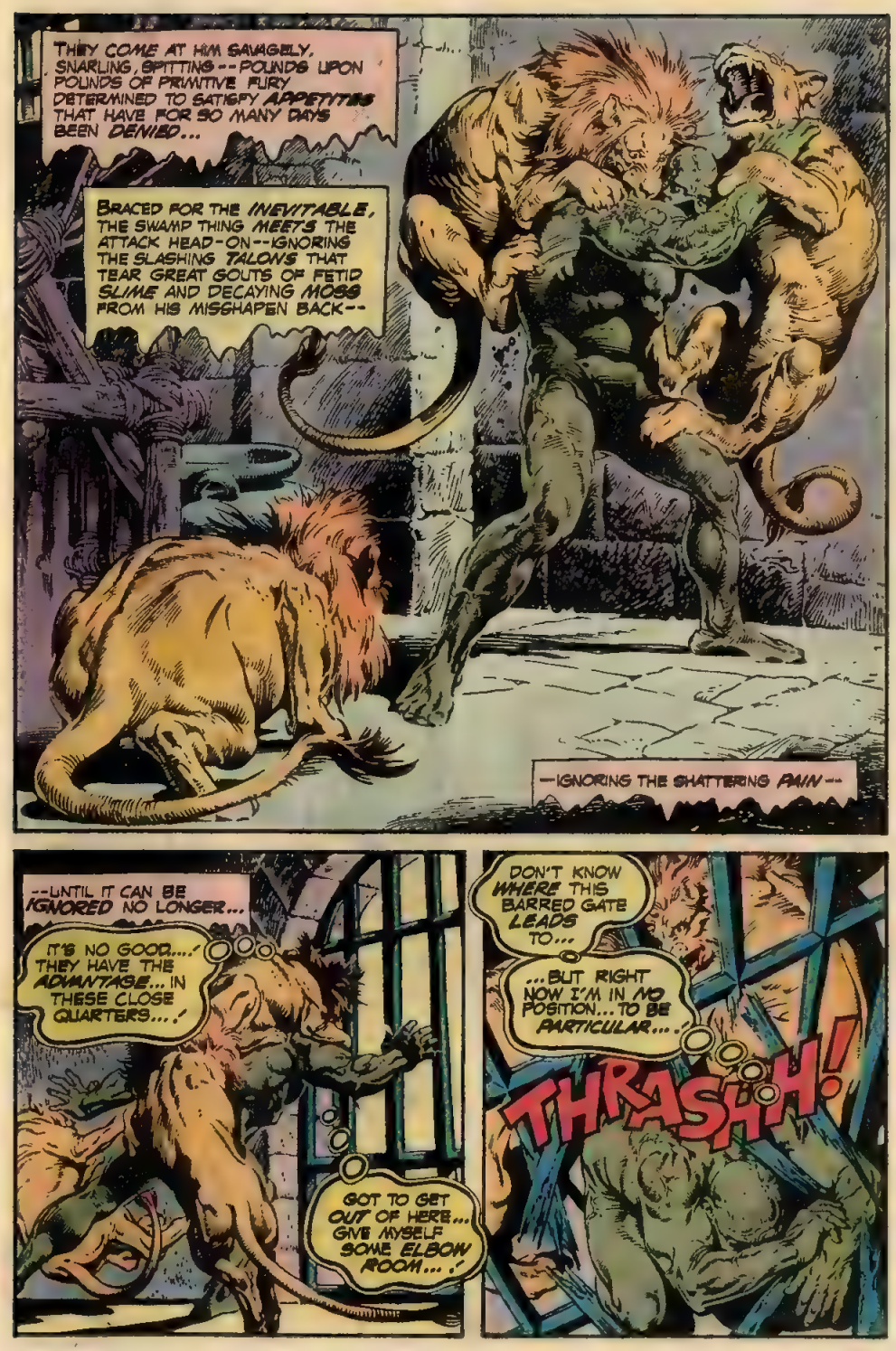

AT THAT, THE BARBARIAN SHUDDERS ONCE--THEN LIES STILL--
--AND THE SWAMP THING FAIRLY BOILS WITH SUDDEN RAGE...
THE GEM...! SOMEHOW, IT IS RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS... PLUNGING ME THROUGH TIME... AND PERHAPS MY POOR FRIEND AS WELL...!
WHY...YOU ACCURSED HELL-JEWEL... I MUST KNOW WHY...!

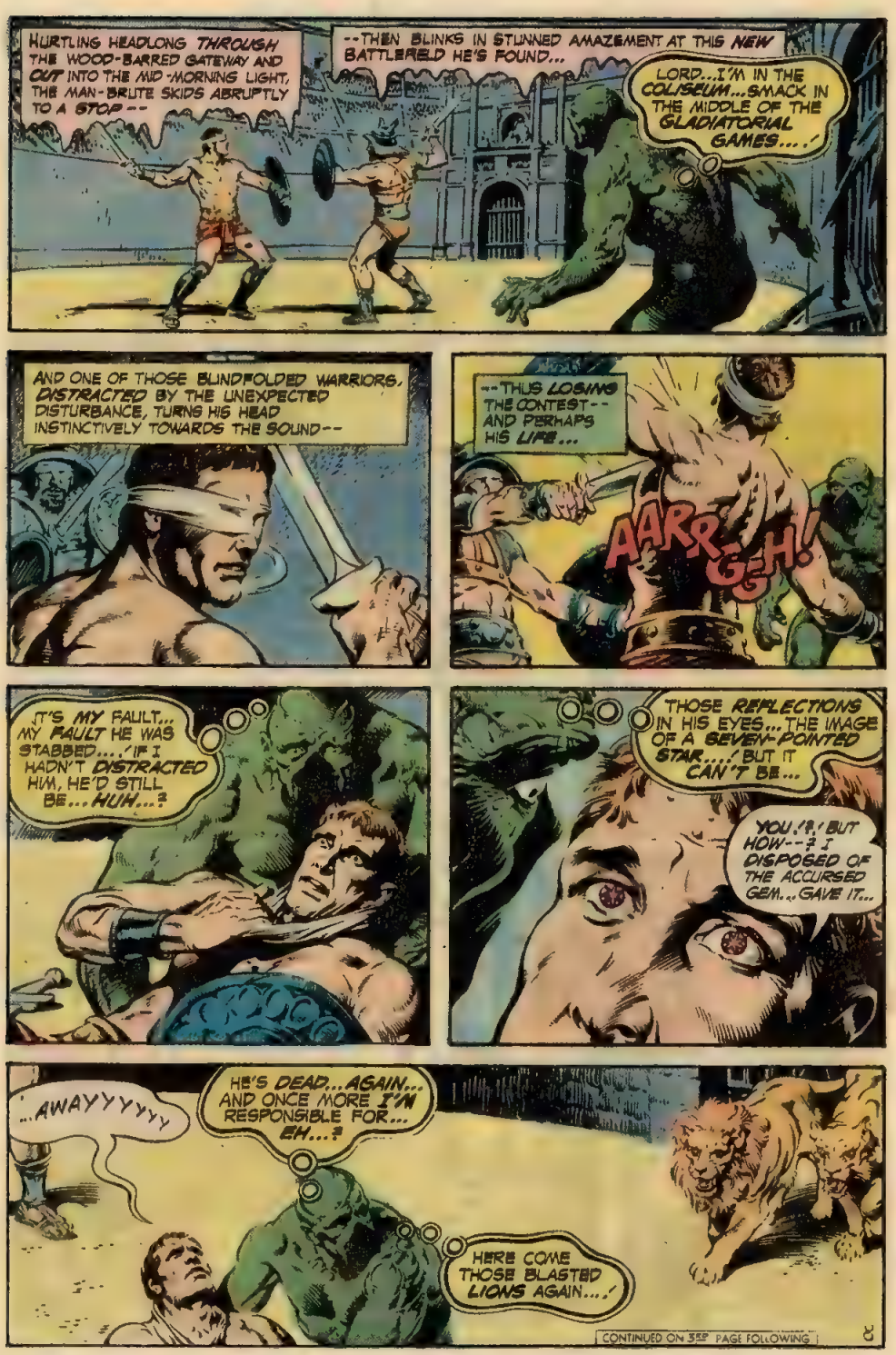

AND, IN ANSWER, THE HELL-JEWEL FLARES, ITS BLINDING BRILLIANCE LACED WITH A RUDE, COLD WHINE--THAT COULD BE THE SOUND OF ANGER--
--OR OF DARK, UNHOLY LAUGHTER.'
THE SWAMP THING FADES SWIFTLY FROM SIGHT...


...AND THUS HE IS NOT WITNESS AS A SPEAR-SUNDERED CHEST ABRUPTLY HEAVES--DRAWS A DEEP BREATH--
--AND A BLOOD-SMEARED BARBARIAN RISES UNSTEADILY TO HIS FEET--SIGHS SOFTLY IN RESIGNATION--THEN PICKS UP THE GLITTERING GEMSTONE AND STAGGERS OFF INTO THE MISTS...
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING
4

FIRST INTERLUDE
IT IS UNCOMMONLY COLD FOR A MORNING IN JUNE; BLEAK CLOUDS HANG OVER THE SHROUDED CEMETERY, BITTER WIND CUTS STRAIGHT TO THE BONE...
IF IT WASN'T SO TRAGIC, IT WOULD ALMOST SEEM TRITE.
BUT FOR MATT CABLE, ABIGAIL ARCANE, AND THE SEETHING YOUNG BLACK MAN NAMED BOLT, IT IS ALMOST TOO TRAGIC TO BEAR...
WHY RUTHY, CABLE? OF ALL GOD'S POOR FORSAKEN CHILDREN, WHY MY GIRL RUTH?
YOU DON'T REALLY EXPECT AN ANSWER TO THAT, DO YOU, BOLT?
NO... WHAT I REALLY WANT IS SOMETHING TO MAKE ME STOP TEARING OUT MY GUTS... SOMETHING TO OCCUPY ME... TO DISTRACT ME...
THEN, MISTER, I THINK I HAVE JUST THE THING YOU'RE LOOKING FOR.'
A BURST OF BRILLIANCE... A CRUEL CHILL WHINE SMOTHERED ALMOST INSTANTLY BY DARKLING SHADOWS... HERALD THE SWAMP THING'S ARRIVAL --
-- BUT DO LITTLE TO ALLEVATE HIS CONFUSION...
WHERE... WHERE AM I NOW...?
A CORRIDOR OF SOME SORT IT SEEMS... BUT WHERE... WHEN...?
BUT AS THE MOSS-WET MAN-BRUTE SHAMBLES OFF IN SEARCH OF ANSWERS...
QUAERE--? ONE OF THE GORILLAS -- BROKEN FREE SOMEHOW OF ITS CAGE--!?
HELP?-! QUICKLY-- SOMEONE HELP ME!'
HIS LANGUAGE... A COLLOQUIAL FORM OF LATIN...
...AND THE CLOTHING OF THESE MEN... GLADIATORS...!
WELL... THAT TELLS ME WHERE I AM... IN ANCIENT ROME SOMETIME ABOUT 100 A.D...

...BUT THAT INFORMATION WON'T DO ME A GREAT DEAL OF GOOD...
...IF I LET THESE HARD-HEADED HEAVYWEIGHTS... CHOP ME TO PIECES....!
PWSTCH!
KKRIPP
DON'T REALLY WANT TO HURT THEM... BUT I HAVE TO GET THEM OUT OF MY WAY...
...BEFORE I CAN DO ANYTHING ABOUT... GETTING BACK TO MY OWN TIME...!
EXIT... WHERE'S THE BLASTED EXIT...?
CAN'T KEEP TOSSING SPARTACUS AND COMPANY... AROUND LIKE THIS ALL DAY...!
BUT THAT IS A PROBLEM THAT QUICKLY BECOMES ACADEMIC, AS...
FLEE, WARRIORS! THIS IS NO FIGHT FOR SUCH AS YOU!
A BEAST SHOULD BE DEALT WITH BY OTHER BEASTS - THUS!
NO...! THAT MADMAN HAS RELEASED... THE LIONS...!
CAUTIOUSLY, FANGS BARED, THE GREAT CATS PAD TOWARD THE MOSS-ENCRUSTED GIANT -- SNIFFING THE AIR, TRYING TO DETERMINE WHETHER THIS STRANGE NEW BEAST WHO STANDS BEFORE THEM IS FOE...
...OR FOOD!


THEY COME AT HIM SAVAGELY, SNARLING, SPITTING -- POUNDS UPON POUNDS OF PRIMITIVE FURY DETERMINED TO SATISFY APPETITES THAT HAVE FOR SO MANY DAYS BEEN DENIED...
BRACED FOR THE INEVITABLE, THE SWAMP THING MEETS THE ATTACK HEAD-ON -- IGNORING THE SLASHING TALONS THAT TEAR GREAT GOUTS OF FETID SLIME AND DECAYING MOSS FROM HIS MISSHAPEN BACK --
-- IGNORING THE SHATTERING PAIN --
-- UNTIL IT CAN BE IGNORED NO LONGER...
IT'S NO GOOD...! THEY HAVE THE ADVANTAGE... IN THESE CLOSE QUARTERS...!
GOT TO GET OUT OF HERE... GIVE MYSELF SOME ELBOW ROOM...!
DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS BARRED GATE LEADS TO...
...BUT RIGHT NOW I'M IN NO POSITION... TO BE PARTICULAR...!
THRASH!


HURTLING HEADLONG THROUGH THE WOOD-BARRED GATEWAY AND OUT INTO THE MID-MORNING LIGHT, THE MAN-BRUTE SKIDS ABRUPTLY TO A STOP--
--THEN BLINKS IN STUNNED AMAZEMENT AT THIS NEW BATTLEFIELD HE'S FOUND...
LORD...I'M IN THE COLISEUM...SMACK IN THE MIDDLE OF THE GLADIATORIAL GAMES...!
AND ONE OF THOSE BLINDFOLDED WARRIORS, DISTRACTED BY THE UNEXPECTED DISTURBANCE, TURNS HIS HEAD INSTINCTIVELY TOWARDS THE SOUND--
--THUS LOSING THE CONTEST--AND PERHAPS HIS LIFE...
AARR-GGH!
IT'S MY FAULT... MY FAULT HE WAS STABBED...! IF I HADN'T DISTRACTED HIM, HE'D STILL BE...HUH...?
THOSE REFLECTIONS IN HIS EYES...THE IMAGE OF A SEVEN-POINTED STAR...! BUT IT CAN'T BE...
YOU...?! BUT HOW--? I DISPOSED OF THE ACCURSED GEM...GAVE IT...
...AWAYYYYYY
HE'S DEAD...AGAIN... AND ONCE MORE I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR... EH...?
HERE COME THOSE BLASTED LIONS AGAIN...!
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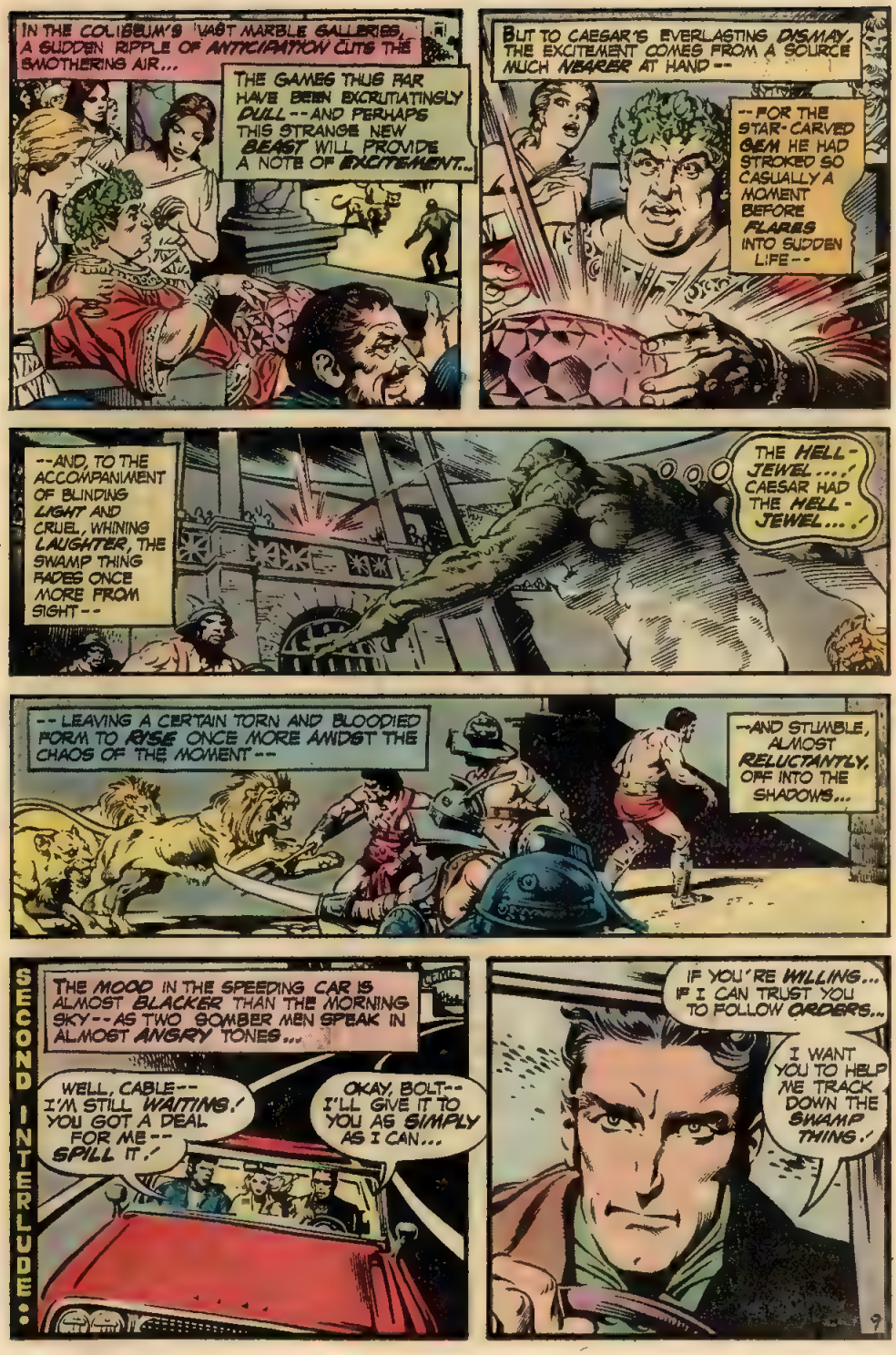
IN THE COLISEUM'S VAST MARBLE GALLERIES, A SUDDEN RIPPLE OF ANTICIPATION CUTS THE SMOTHERING AIR...
THE GAMES THUS FAR HAVE BEEN EXCRUTIATINGLY DULL--AND PERHAPS THIS STRANGE NEW BEAST WILL PROVIDE A NOTE OF EXCITEMENT...
BUT TO CAESAR'S EVERLASTING DISMAY, THE EXCITEMENT COMES FROM A SOURCE MUCH NEARER AT HAND--
--FOR THE STAR-CARVED GEM HE HAD STROKED SO CASUALLY A MOMENT BEFORE FLARES INTO SUDDEN LIFE--
--AND, TO THE ACCOMPANIMENT OF BLINDING LIGHT AND CRUEL, WHINING LAUGHTER, THE SWAMP THING FADES ONCE MORE FROM SIGHT--
THE HELL-JEWEL...! CAESAR HAD THE HELL-JEWEL...!
--LEAVING A CERTAIN TORN AND BLOODIED FORM TO RYSE ONCE MORE AMIDST THE CHAOS OF THE MOMENT--
--AND STUMBLE, ALMOST RELUCTANTLY, OFF INTO THE SHADOWS...
SECOND INTERLUDE..
THE MOOD IN THE SPEEDING CAR IS ALMOST BLACKER THAN THE MORNING SKY--AS TWO BOMBER MEN SPEAK IN ALMOST ANGRY TONES...
WELL, CABLE--I'M STILL WAITING! YOU GOT A DEAL FOR ME--SPILL IT!
OKAY, BOLT--I'LL GIVE IT TO YOU AS SIMPLY AS I CAN...
IF YOU'RE WILLING... IF I CAN TRUST YOU TO FOLLOW ORDERS...
I WANT YOU TO HELP ME TRACK DOWN THE SWAMP THING!
9

AGAIN THE BURST OF BRILLIANCE, THE DARK, UNNERVING WHINE-- AND THIS TIME WHEN THE SWAMP THING ARRIVES, IT IS ON A DARKENED CITY STREET...
NOW WHERE...? A CITY, IT SEEMS... BUT WHAT CENTURY...?
AND WHAT IS THAT TERRIBLE STENCH IN THE AIR... LIKE THE SMELL OF BURNING REFUSE...
...OR THE SMELL OF...
...DEATH...!
GOTT IM HIMMEL--!
ES--ES IST DER SCHWARZE TOD-- THE BLACK DEATH.'
THE LANGUAGE... THE CLOTHING... AND THAT WAGON FILLED WITH CORPSES....'
I'M IN EUROPE DURING THE MID-FOURTEENTH CENTURY...DURING THE TIME OF THE BLACK DEATH...
...AND AFTER ONE GOOD LOOK AT MY MUCK-COVERED BODY... THEY'VE DECIDED THAT I AM THE PLAGUE PERSONIFIED....!
KILL IT.! SLAY THE HELLISH THING--.!
BUT, HANS-- HOW CAN DEATH DIE?
I DO NOT KNOW, OTTO-- BUT WE CAN DO NO LESS THAN TRY."
I SUPPOSE I CAN'T REALLY BLAME THESE MEN FOR THIS... BUT I AM BECOMING ANNOYED AT ALL THIS NONETHELESS....'
THRACK
CHRAK
10

NICHT--NICHT--! PLEASE--DON'T--!
SORRY... BUT WHEREVER I'VE APPEARED SO FAR...IN THE COURSE OF THIS LUNATIC TIME-TRIP...
...I'VE BEEN INSTANTLY ELECTED TARGET FOR THE DAY...
...AND FRANKLY, FRIEND.... I'M SICK OF IT....!
THWUMP
SHOULD TAKE THEM A WHILE TO PULL THEMSELVES TOGETHER... WHICH LEAVES ME AMPLE TIME TO BEAT A STRATEGIC RETREAT...
...AND BEAT OUT THESE ANNOYING TAR-FLAMES WHILE I'M AT IT....!
NO NEED FOR ME TO PIN-POINT MY LOCATION FOR THEM....! THEY'LL FIND ME SOON ENOUGH AS IT IS...
...UNLESS I CAN SOMEHOW LOSE THEM...IN THIS MAZE OF STREETS....!
DOWN DARKENED STREETS, THROUGH TWISTING ALLEYWAYS, THE MASSIVE MAN-MONSTER SHAMBLES--IN HOPES OF EVADING HIS FEAR-FRAUGHT PURSUERS--
--AND, AT LENGTH...
THAT SHOULD DO IT....! THEY'LL NEVER FIND ME NOW....!
LORD, WHAT A WONDROUS FOOL I HAVE BEEN--TO HAVE LET YOU USE ME SO.!
EH...? VOICES...! THERE'S SOMEONE INSIDE THAT COTTAGE....!

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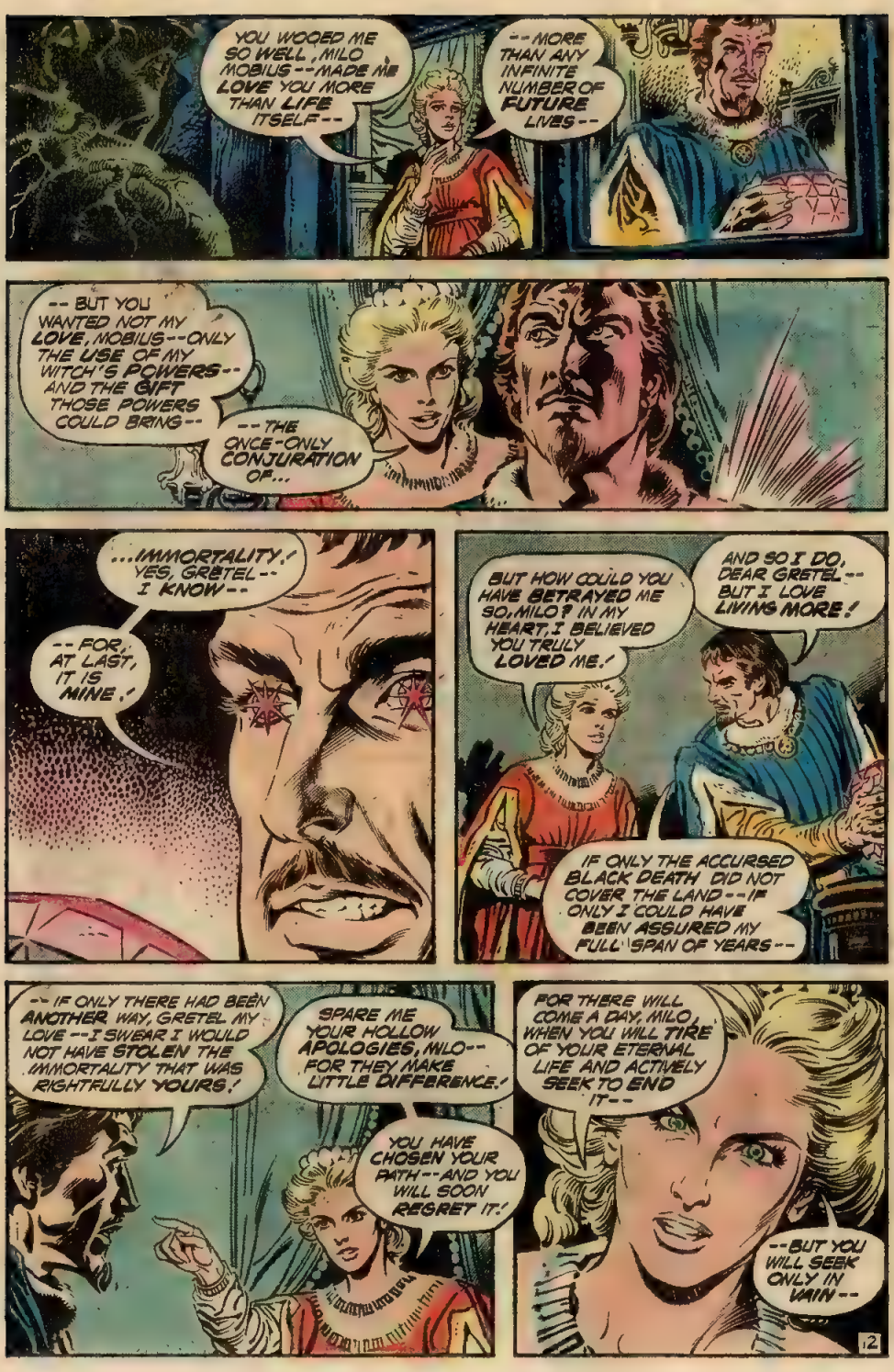
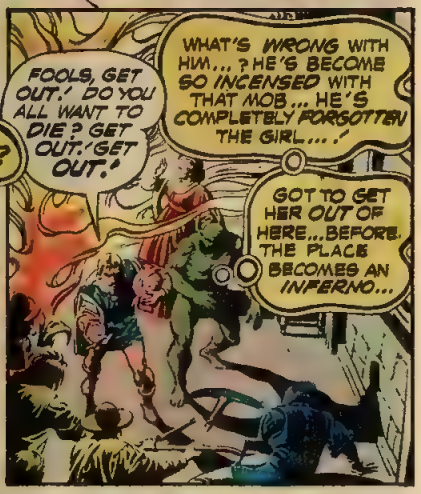

YOU WOOED ME SO WELL, MILO MOBIUS--MADE ME LOVE YOU MORE THAN LIFE ITSELF--
--MORE THAN ANY INFINITE NUMBER OF FUTURE LIVES--
--BUT YOU WANTED NOT MY LOVE, MOBIUS--ONLY THE USE OF MY WITCH'S POWERS--AND THE GIFT THOSE POWERS COULD BRING--
--THE ONCE-ONLY CONJURATION OF...
...IMMORTALITY.! YES, GRETEL--I KNOW--
--FOR, AT LAST, IT IS MINE.!
BUT HOW COULD YOU HAVE BETRAYED ME SO, MILO? IN MY HEART, I BELIEVED YOU TRULY LOVED ME.!
AND SO I DO, DEAR GRETEL--BUT I LOVE LIVING MORE!
IF ONLY THE ACCURSED BLACK DEATH DID NOT COVER THE LAND--IF ONLY I COULD HAVE BEEN ASSURED MY FULL SPAN OF YEARS--
--IF ONLY THERE HAD BEEN ANOTHER WAY, GRETEL MY LOVE--I SWEAR I WOULD NOT HAVE STOLEN THE IMMORTALITY THAT WAS RIGHTFULLY YOURS.!
SPARE ME YOUR HOLLOW APOLOGIES, MILO--FOR THEY MAKE LITTLE DIFFERENCE.!
YOU HAVE CHOSEN YOUR PATH--AND YOU WILL SOON REGRET IT.!
FOR THERE WILL COME A DAY, MILO, WHEN YOU WILL TIRE OF YOUR ETERNAL LIFE AND ACTIVELY SEEK TO END IT--
--BUT YOU WILL SEEK ONLY IN VAIN--

--FOR ONLY THE HAND OF A FRIEND CAN EVER PUT YOU TO YOUR FINAL REST--
--AND, MILO MY LOVE, YOU HAVE NO FRIENDS.!
STILL, YOU WILL TRY TO DIE--AND EACH FAILURE WILL DRAW YOU BACK TO TIME'S BEGINNING--TO RELIVE THAT FAILURE--AND THE ONES THAT WILL SURELY FOLLOW--
--AND THAT, MY DARLING, IS THE CRUELEST FORM OF--HELL.!
HERE, MILO--TAKE THE STAR-CROSSED GEM THAT SEALED OUR BARGAIN.! LET IT FOREVER BE A REMINDER OF HOW CHEAPLY YOU BARTERED YOUR SOUL.!
ALL RIGHT, GRETEL--ENOUGH.! YOUR RAZORED TONGUE HAS DRAWN SUFFICIENT BLOOD.!
I DID NOT WISH TO HURT YOU, BUT IT SEEMS THAT WAS UNAVOIDABLE IN...LIEBER GOTT.!
THAT FACE... LIKE THE VISAGE OF A THING FROM THE PIT...
WHO... WHAT ARE YOU?
I WAS RIGHT... IT'S HIM AGAIN... THE MAN WITH THE STAR-LIT EYES...
...AND FOR A CHANGE... HE ISN'T DYING...!
BUT THAT IS A CONDITION THAT CAN EASILY BE REMEDIED...AS SUDDENLY...
THERE...THERE IT IS.! I TOLD YOU WE WOULD FIND THE ACCURSED THING IF WE FOLLOWED ITS SLIME-CAKED TRAIL.!
NO...NOT THEM AGAIN...!
13

OF ALL THE MISERABLE TIMING...! I'VE GOT TO GET RID OF THEM... THEN TRY TO COMMUNICATE WITH MY STARRY-EYED FRIEND...
...FIND OUT WHAT THAT HELL-JEWEL MEANS TO HIM... AND TO MY TIME-TRAVELING ESCAPADES...!
THWAK!

ONWARD, MY FRIENDS-- LET THE CLEANSING BREATH OF FIRE RID US OF THE BLACK DISEASE FOREVER!
NO--NO--! YOU'VE PUT THE TORCH TO MY HOME!
WHAT...?


FOOLS, GET OUT! DO YOU ALL WANT TO DIE? GET OUT! GET OUT!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH HIM...? HE'S BECOME SO INCENSED WITH THAT MOB... HE'S COMPLETELY FORSOTTEN THE GIRL...!
GOT TO GET HER OUT OF HERE... BEFORE THE PLACE BECOMES AN INFERNO...

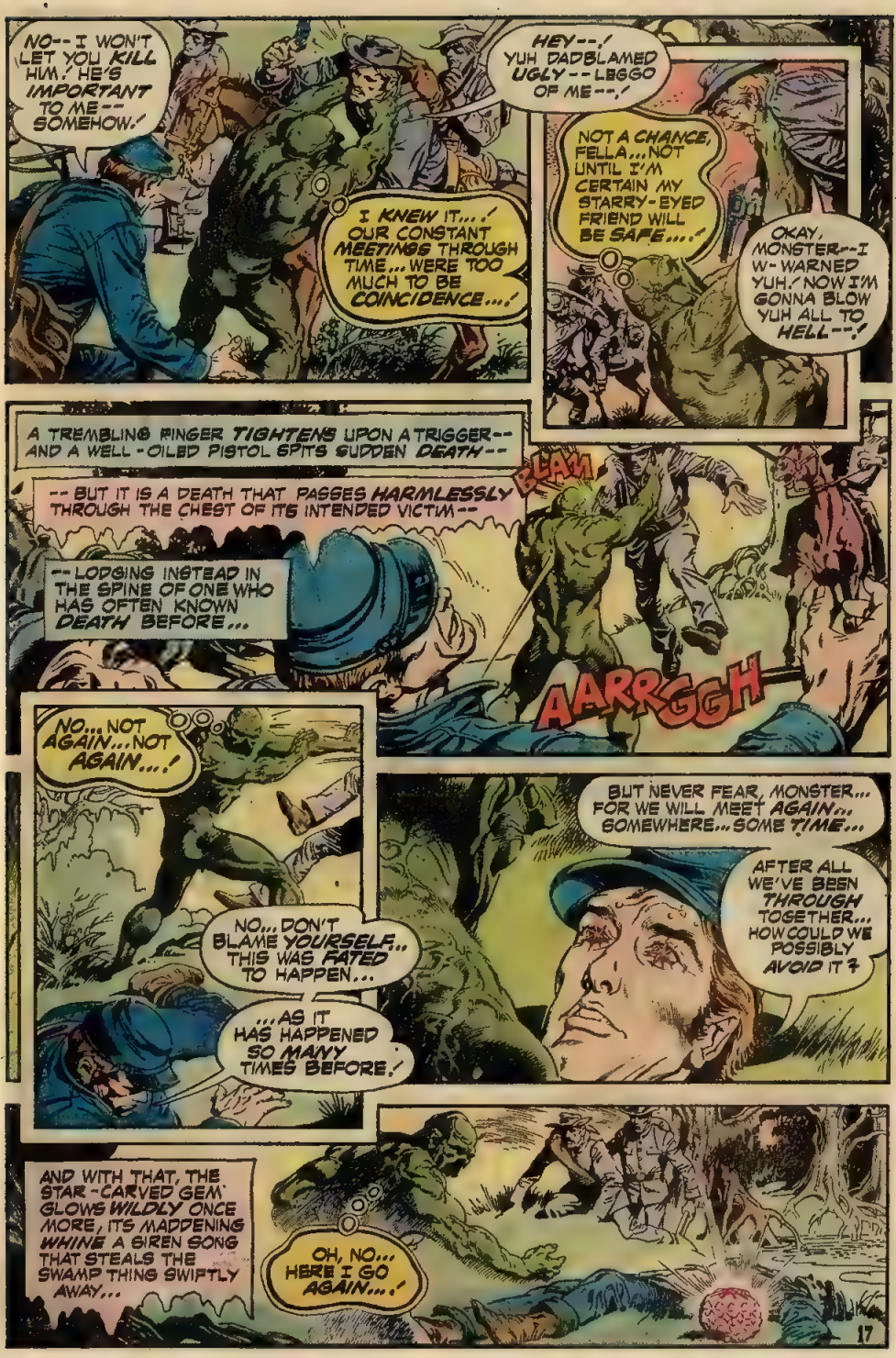
...AND WITH THOSE MANIACS BLOCKING THE DOOR...I GUESS I'LL HAVE TO MAKE MY OWN EXIT...!
NHRUNCH

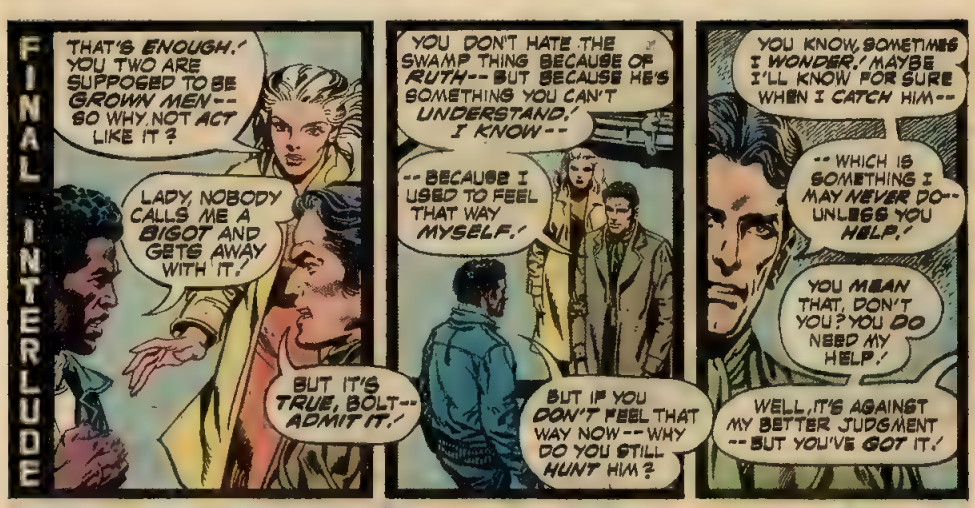
MADE IT... AND JUST IN TIME...! THAT WHOLE PLACE WILL BE COMING DOWN IN PIECES... ANY SECOND NOW...!
HERE COME MY OLD PLAYMATES... BUT WHERE'S MY TIME-HOPPING FRIEND...?

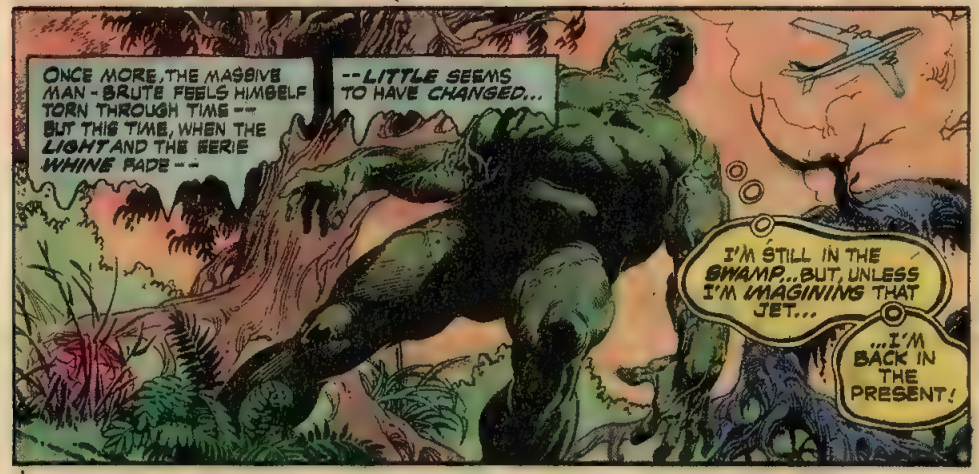
AND, UNFORTUNATELY, THE SWAMP THING'S ANSWER IS ACCOMPANIED BY A FAMILIAR BURST OF LIGHT AND, AN EQUALLY-FAMILIAR WHINE...
NO... HE'S STILL INSIDE... AND I'M... I'M FADING AWAY AGAIN... NOT A CHANCE FOR ME TO SAVE HIM...
...BUT I HAVE THE FEELING WE'LL MEET AGAIN... SOMETIME...!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

THIRD INTERLUDE
YOU WANT ME TO DO WHAT? MAN, YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT THAT SWAMP FREAK./ IF NOT FOR HIM, MY RUTHY MIGHT STILL BE ALIVE.'
C'MON, BOLT--YOU KNOW THAT'S A CROCK OF CRUD.'
RUTH WAS SHOT TO DEATH BY THAT MANIAC ZACHARY NAIL./ THE SWAMP THING HAD NOTHING TO DO WITH IT.'
IN FACT, IF IT WASN'T FOR THE SWAMP THING, WE MIGHT ALL BE DEAD-- BLOWN TO KINGDOM COME ALONG WITH NAIL'S UNDER-GROUND CITY.'*
* AS SHOWN IN DETAIL LAST ISSUE. -- EDITOR
OKAY, SO MAYBE YOU'RE RIGHT-- BUT NAIL IS DEAD-- AND I'VE GOTTA TAKE MY MAD OUT ON SOMEBODY.'
SO YOU TAKE IT OUT ON HIM? WHY, BOLT-- BECAUSE HE'S DIFFERENT?
YOU KNOW, FRIEND--I THINK YOU'RE A BIGOT.'
ONCE MORE THE LIGHT, THE CHILLING WHINE-- BUT THIS TIME THE SWAMP THING DOES NOT MIND THEM--
--FOR THEY SEEM TO HAVE CARRIED HIM...
...HOME... AT LAST...
HOME...? WHO'D EVER HAVE THOUGHT THAT ONE DAY... I WOULD CALL THIS DISMAL BOG HOME...?
BETTER SIT DOWN...TRY TO PUZZLE OUT WHAT HAPPENED TO ME BEFORE...
EH...? THAT SOUND... LIKE THE CLATTER OF HORSE'S HOOVES... AND IT'S COMING THIS WAY....'
AND, SUDDENLY, FROM THE UNDERBRUSH, THERE ERUPTS...
OH, NO...THAT UNIFORM...! IT'S THE RIGHT SWAMP I'M IN... BUT THE WRONG TIME....'
I'M BACK IN... THE CIVIL WAR...!

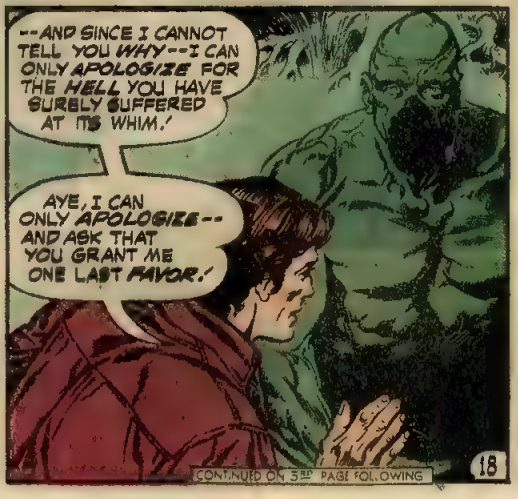
AND NATURALLY I'VE RUN INTO...MY STARRY-EYED FRIEND ONCE MORE....!
YOU... AGAIN?
YES...OF COURSE... I REMEMBER THAT NOW.! YET THERE'S SOMETHING...SOMETHING ELSE I CAN'T RECALL... SOMETHING IMPORTANT...!
DAMN-- NO TIME TO THINK NOW.! GOT TO GET MOVING BEFORE THEY CATCH UP.!
REB RAIDERS--THEY SPOTTED THE ACCURSED JEWEL I CARRY.! THEY'RE AFTER ME--AND THEY'LL STOP AT NOTHING TO GET... EH?
YES, FRIEND...I HEAR IT, TOO...!
THE SOUND OF HORSES...MANY HORSES...COMING THIS WAY...! NOT A HOPE OF ESCAPING THEM...!
I-I REMEMBER NOW.! IT'S ALL SO...INEVITABLE!
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL...A POSITIVE ATTITUDE...BUT UNFORTUNATELY MY FRIEND IS RIGHT...!
LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME...TO PLAY TARGET AGAIN...!
C'MON, YOU LAZY HOUN' DOGS-- THERE HE IS!
B-B-BUT WHUT'S THET THING WITH 'IM?
MAKES NO NEVERMIND WHUT IT IS--ONCE IT'S DAID!
BLAM BLAM BLAM


NO--I WON'T LET YOU KILL HIM! HE'S IMPORTANT TO ME--SOMEHOW!
I KNEW IT...! OUR CONSTANT MEETINGS THROUGH TIME...WERE TOO MUCH TO BE COINCIDENCE...!
HEY--! YUH DADBLAMED UGLY--LEGGO OF ME--!
NOT A CHANCE, FELLA...NOT UNTIL I'M CERTAIN MY STARRY-EYED FRIEND WILL BE SAFE...!
OKAY, MONSTER--I W-WARNED YUH! NOW I'M GONNA BLOW YUH ALL TO HELL--!
A TREMBLING FINGER TIGHTENS UPON A TRIGGER--AND A WELL-OILED PISTOL SPITS SUDDEN DEATH--
--BUT IT IS A DEATH THAT PASSES HARMLESSLY THROUGH THE CHEST OF ITS INTENDED VICTIM--
--LODGING INSTEAD IN THE SPINE OF ONE WHO HAS OFTEN KNOWN DEATH BEFORE...
BLAM!
AARRGGH
NO...NOT AGAIN...NOT AGAIN...!
NO...DON'T BLAME YOURSELF...THIS WAS FATED TO HAPPEN...
...AS IT HAS HAPPENED SO MANY TIMES BEFORE!
BUT NEVER FEAR, MONSTER...FOR WE WILL MEET AGAIN...SOMEWHERE...SOME TIME...
AFTER ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH TOGETHER...HOW COULD WE POSSIBLY AVOID IT?
AND WITH THAT, THE STAR-CARVED GEM GLOWS WILDLY ONCE MORE, ITS MADDENING WHINE A SIREN SONG THAT STEALS THE SWAMP THING SWIFTLY AWAY...
OH, NO...HERE I GO AGAIN...!


FINAL INTERLUDE
THAT'S ENOUGH.' YOU TWO ARE SUPPOSED TO BE GROWN MEN -- SO WHY NOT ACT LIKE IT?
LADY, NOBODY CALLS ME A BIGOT AND GETS AWAY WITH IT.'
BUT IT'S TRUE, BOLT -- ADMIT IT.'
YOU DON'T HATE THE SWAMP THING BECAUSE OF RUTH -- BUT BECAUSE HE'S SOMETHING YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND.' I KNOW --
-- BECAUSE I USED TO FEEL THAT WAY MYSELF.'
BUT IF YOU DON'T FEEL THAT WAY NOW -- WHY DO YOU STILL HUNT HIM?
YOU KNOW, SOMETIMES I WONDER.' MAYBE I'LL KNOW FOR SURE WHEN I CATCH HIM --
-- WHICH IS SOMETHING I MAY NEVER DO -- UNLESS YOU HELP.'
YOU MEAN THAT, DON'T YOU? YOU DO NEED MY HELP.'
WELL, IT'S AGAINST MY BETTER JUDGMENT -- BUT YOU'VE GOT IT.'


ONCE MORE, THE MASSIVE MAN-BRUTE FEELS HIMSELF TORN THROUGH TIME -- BUT THIS TIME, WHEN THE LIGHT AND THE EERIE WHINE FADE --
-- LITTLE SEEMS TO HAVE CHANGED...
I'M STILL IN THE SWAMP... BUT, UNLESS I'M IMAGINING THAT JET...
...I'M BACK IN THE PRESENT!

WELCOME BACK, MY FRIEND,' I KNEW THAT ACCURSED GEM WOULD DRAW YOU HERE... SOONER OR LATER.'
IT LINKS US SOMEHOW, YOU KNOW -- BONDS US TOGETHER WITH SHACKLES OF TIME --


-- AND SINCE I CANNOT TELL YOU WHY -- I CAN ONLY APOLOGIZE FOR THE HELL YOU HAVE SURELY SUFFERED AT ITS WHIM.'
AYE, I CAN ONLY APOLOGIZE -- AND ASK THAT YOU GRANT ME ONE LAST FAVOR.'

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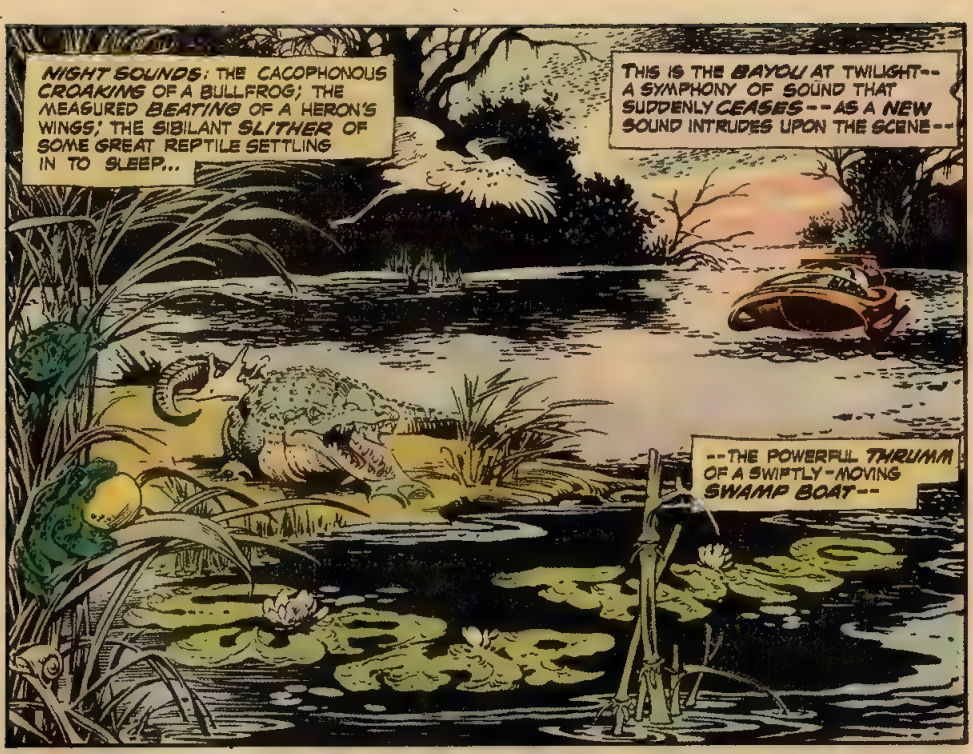
I DON'T KNOW WHAT TERRIBLE SIN YOU COMMITTED TO BE IMPRISONED IN SO HIDEOUS A FORM, BUT MY SIN--MY CURSE--IS FAR GREATER.!
I AM IMMORTAL, MY FRIEND--AND I HATE IT--HATE THE ETERNITIES I'VE ENDURED, MY FAILURES FOREVER FLUNG BACK INTO MY FACE.!
I WANT IT ENDED, MY FRIEND--I WANT RELEASE.! PLEASE, I BEG YOU--I IMPLORE YOU--
--KILL ME AND PUT ME TO MY REST.!
WHAT...?
AT FIRST, THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MAN-MONSTER FEELS SHOCK, REVULSION--THEN PITY SEEMS TO WELL UP IN HIS RHEUMY, RED-RIMMED EYES--
--AND, IN A VOICE THAT IS LITTLE MORE THAN A GURGLING GROWL, THE SWAMP THING SPEAKS...
I... CANNOT... KILL...!
...THEN HE TURNS, AND SHAMBLES OFF INTO THE MIRE...
NO,! PLEASE--COME BACK, MY FRIEND--COME BACK.!
I CAN'T, MOBIUS...! FORGIVE ME.. BUT I CAN'T...!
TERRIFIED AT THE PROSPECT OF LOSING HIS ONE HOPE OF GAINING FINAL PEACE, THE ETERNAL MAN RUSHES FORWARD--
--AND PLUNGES HEADLONG INTO DISASTER...
I BEG YOU--DON'T LEAVE ME LIKE THIS.! DON'T-WHA--?
SPLASH
THE FOOL... HE'S FALLEN INTO THE MIDDLE... OF THE QUICKSAND BOG I INSTINCTIVELY AVOIDED...!
GOT TO GET HIM OUT OF THERE...BEFORE HE GOES UNDER...!
PLEASE--HELP ME.! DON'T LET ME DIE LIKE THIS--!
PLEASE--NOT LIKE THIS--!

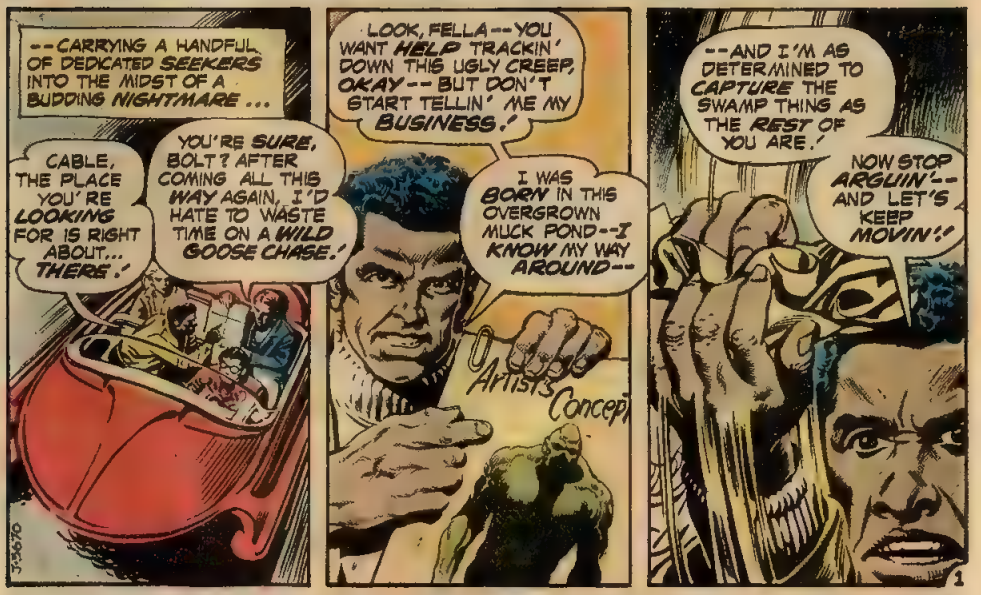
IF I DIE BEFORE YOU CAN KILL ME-- THE CYCLE BEGINS ANEW.' I'LL BE THROWN BACK TO TIME'S BEGINNING-- FORCED TO RELIVE ALL MY FAILURES -- INCLUDING THIS ONE.'
PLEASE-- YOU CAN'T LET THAT HAPPEN!
NO GOOD...! HE'S IN TOO DEEP...FOR ME TO REACH HIM...!
AND BEFORE THE SWAMP THING CAN DO ANYTHING MORE...
HE'S GONE UNDER... DROPPED FROM SIGHT LIKE A STONE... BUT HE CAN'T BE TOO FAR BELOW THE SURFACE...!
IF I CAN PULL HIM UP... BEFORE HIS BREATH RUNS OUT... HE MAY STILL HAVE A CHANCE...!
AND WHEN ROOT-GNARLED HANDS BREAK THE BOG'S SURFACE INTERMINABLE MOMENTS LATER, PULLING THE MOSSY MONSTROSITY TO SAFETY--
--HE IS SADLY ALONE!
DON'T UNDERSTAND IT...! HE COULDN'T HAVE SUNK THAT DEEP...AND YET... THERE WAS NO TRACE OF HIM...
...AS IF HE'D SIMPLY... DISAPPEARED...!
MOBIUS MAY BE GONE... BUT HE LEFT A CERTAIN BAUBLE BEHIND HIM...
...AND I'D BEST PUT IT AWAY FOR SAFE KEEPING... THEN LEAVE SOMETHING TO MARK THE PLACE...
.....BECAUSE I HAVE THE UNNERVING FEELING...HE'LL BE BACK SOME DAY TO PICK IT UP...!
THE END
20

NEXT: CHAOS IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL AS THE SWAMP THING IS CAPTURED AT LAST! BE HERE FOR... THE LEVIATHAN CONSPIRACY

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE SECOND WEEK IN AUG

THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
STILL ONLY
20¢
NO. 13
DEC
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY


NIGHT SOUNDS: THE CACOPHONOUS CROAKING OF A BULLFROG; THE MEASURED BEATING OF A HERON'S WINGS; THE SIBILANT SLITHER OF SOME GREAT REPTILE SETTLING IN TO SLEEP...
THIS IS THE BAYOU AT TWILIGHT--A SYMPHONY OF SOUND THAT SUDDENLY CEASES--AS A NEW SOUND INTRUDES UPON THE SCENE--
--THE POWERFUL THRUMM OF A SWIFTLY-MOVING SWAMP BOAT--


--CARRYING A HANDFUL OF DEDICATED SEEKERS INTO THE MIDST OF A BUDDING NIGHTMARE ...
CABLE, THE PLACE YOU'RE LOOKING FOR IS RIGHT ABOUT... THERE.'
YOU'RE SURE, BOLT? AFTER COMING ALL THIS WAY AGAIN, I'D HATE TO WASTE TIME ON A WILD GOOSE CHASE.'
LOOK, FELLA--YOU WANT HELP TRACKIN' DOWN THIS UGLY CREEP, OKAY--BUT DON'T START TELLIN' ME MY BUSINESS.'
I WAS BORN IN THIS OVERGROWN MUCK POND--I KNOW MY WAY AROUND--
Artist's Concept
--AND I'M AS DETERMINED TO CAPTURE THE SWAMP THING AS THE REST OF YOU ARE.'
NOW STOP ARGUIN'--AND LET'S KEEP MOVIN'!!
1

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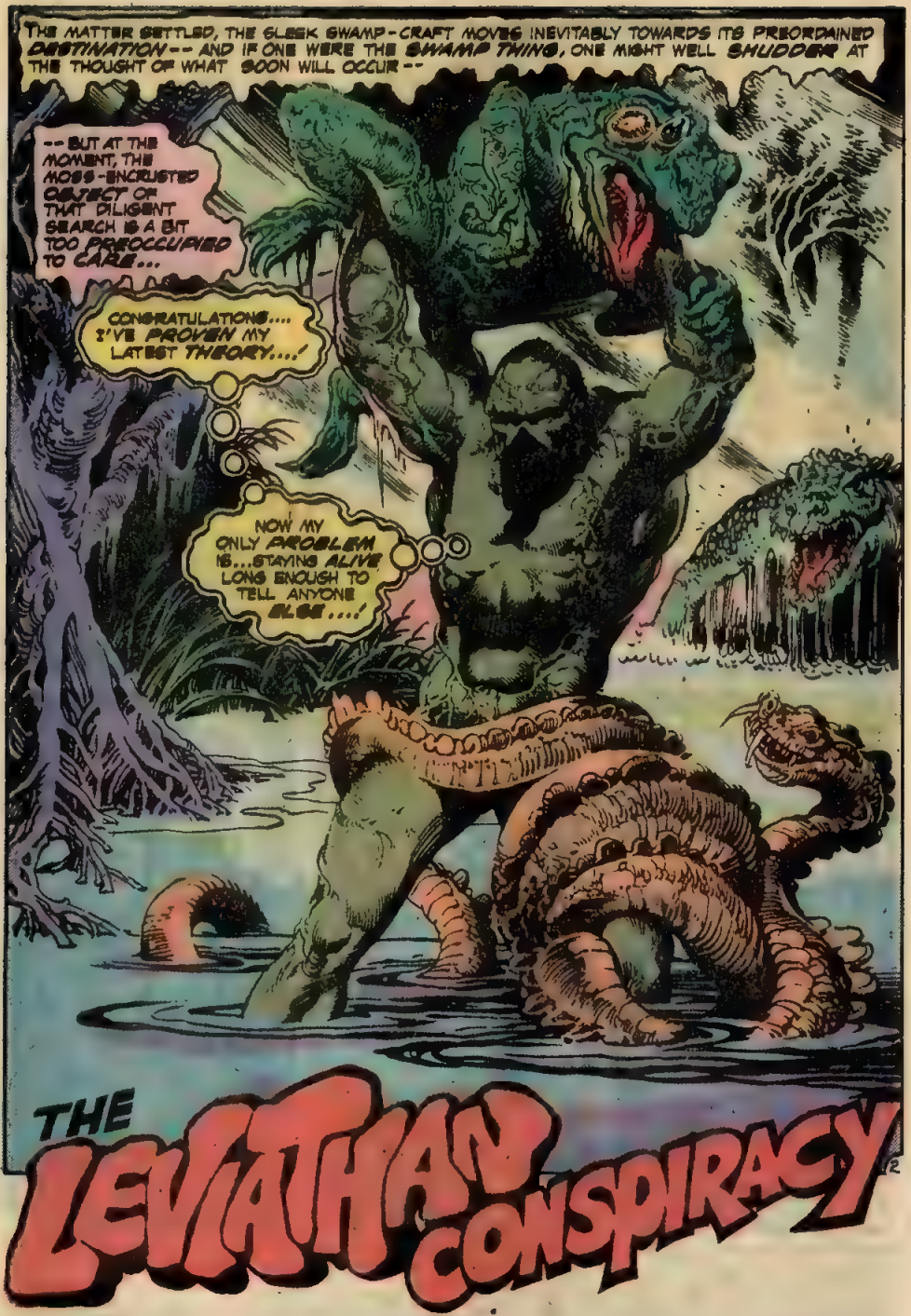
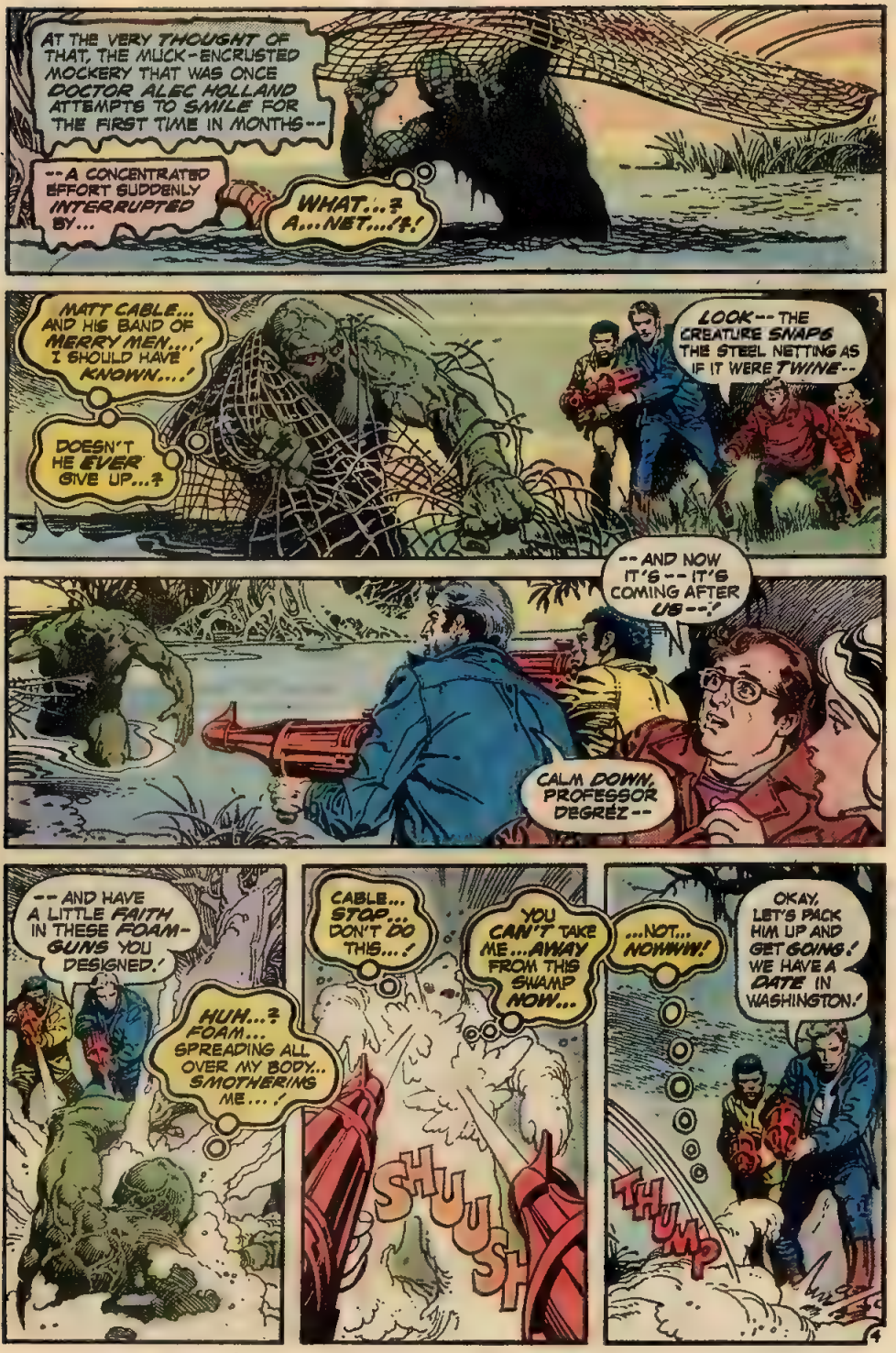
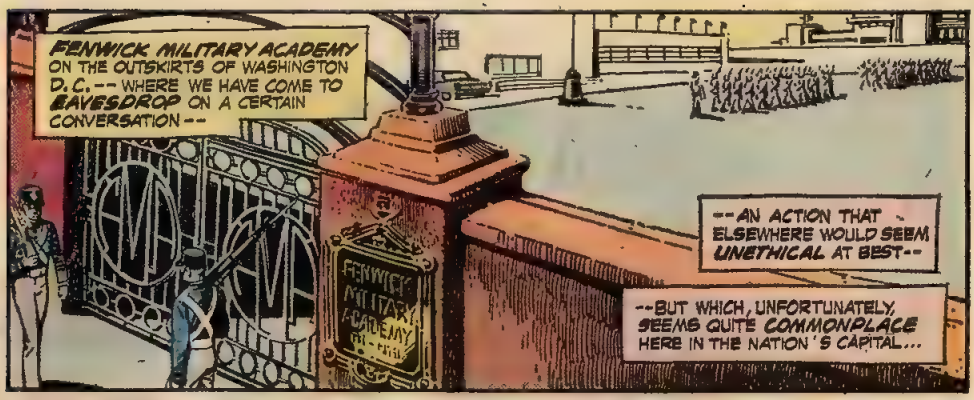
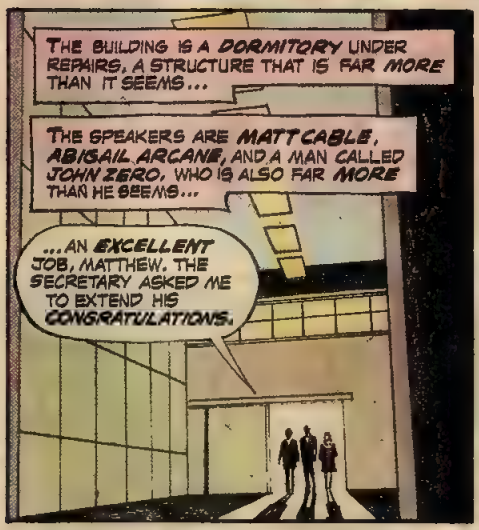
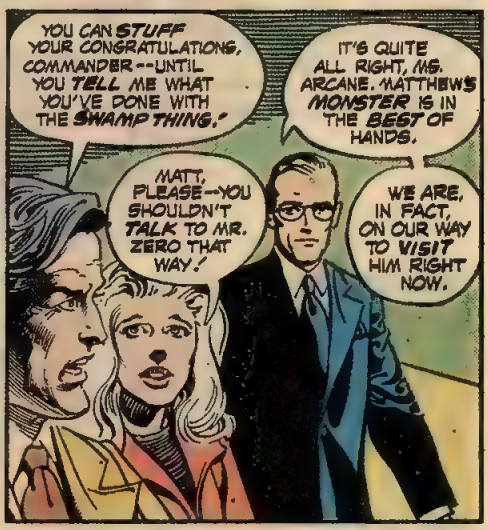

THE MATTER SETTLED, THE SLEEK SWAMP-CRAFT MOVES INEVITABLY TOWARDS ITS PREORDAINED DESTINATION -- AND IF ONE WERE THE SWAMP THING, ONE MIGHT WELL SHUDDER AT THE THOUGHT OF WHAT SOON WILL OCCUR --
-- BUT AT THE MOMENT, THE MOSS-ENCRUSTED OBJECT OF THAT DILIGENT SEARCH IS A BIT TOO PREOCCUPIED TO CARE...
CONGRATULATIONS.... I'VE PROVEN MY LATEST THEORY....!
NOW MY ONLY PROBLEM IS...STAYING ALIVE LONG ENOUGH TO TELL ANYONE ELSE....!
THE LEVIATHAN CONSPIRACY
12
A LEN WEIN - NESTOR REDONDO - JOE ORLANDO PRESENTATION
(WRITER) (ILLUSTRATOR) (EDITOR)

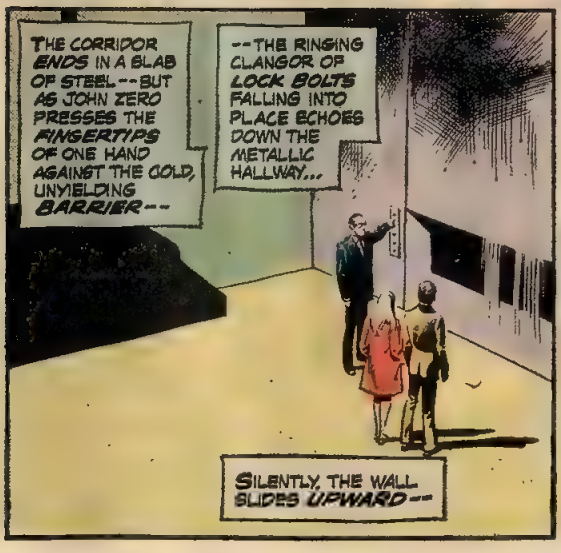
EVER SINCE I RESCUED MATT CABLE AND HIS LADY FRIEND...FROM THAT ALLIGATOR-THING A FEW DAYS AGO*...
...SOMETHING HAS BEEN PREYING ON MY MIND...
CRACK
* AS SHOWN IN SWAMP THING # 11
...WHERE DID THE CREATURE COME FROM... AND WHY... :UUHHHN!
...WHY DID IT SEEM TO RESEMBLE ME...?
WHY WAS ITS BODY COVERED WITH MOSS... AND TANGLED WITH ROOTS... THE WAY MINE IS...
...THE WAY THESE CREATURES ARE...?
AND THAT IS WHAT SETTLED THE MATTER...! ONE SWAMPISH LOOKALIKE I MIGHT HAVE ACCEPTED... AS AN AMAZING FLUKE OF NATURE...
...BUT A WHOLE ARMY OF THEM...!
AND KNOWING THE POSSIBLE CAUSE OF MY CONDITION...
...MAYBE I CAN FINALLY FIND...A CURE FOR IT...!
NO... THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THE SWAMP ITSELF...SOME SORT OF CHEMICAL IMBALANCE...!
IT HELPED TURN ME INTO THE SWAMP THING... AND SLOWLY IT'S DOING THE SAME TO EVERYTHING ELSE THAT LIVES HERE...!
THROK


AT THE VERY THOUGHT OF THAT, THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY THAT WAS ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND ATTEMPTS TO SMILE FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MONTHS--
--A CONCENTRATED EFFORT SUDDENLY INTERRUPTED BY...
WHAT...? A...NET...?!
MATT CABLE... AND HIS BAND OF MERRY MEN....' I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN....'
DOESN'T HE EVER GIVE UP...?
LOOK--THE CREATURE SNAPS THE STEEL NETTING AS IF IT WERE TWINE--
--AND NOW IT'S--IT'S COMING AFTER US--!'
CALM DOWN, PROFESSOR DEGREZ--
--AND HAVE A LITTLE FAITH IN THESE FOAM-GUNS YOU DESIGNED.'
HUH...? FOAM... SPREADING ALL OVER MY BODY.. SMOTHERING ME...!'
CABLE... STOP... DON'T DO THIS...!
YOU CAN'T TAKE ME...AWAY FROM THIS SWAMP NOW...
SHUUSH
...NOT... NOWWW!
OKAY, LET'S PACK HIM UP AND GET GOING! WE HAVE A DATE IN WASHINGTON!
THUMP

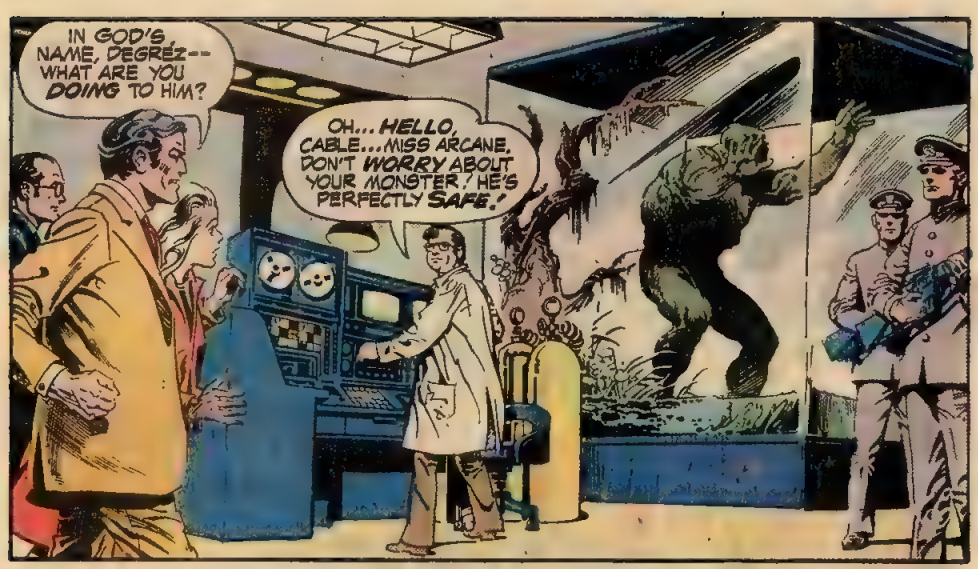

FENWICK MILITARY ACADEMY ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF WASHINGTON D.C.-- WHERE WE HAVE COME TO EAVESDROP ON A CERTAIN CONVERSATION--
--AN ACTION THAT ELSEWHERE WOULD SEEM UNETHICAL AT BEST--
--BUT WHICH, UNFORTUNATELY, SEEMS QUITE COMMONPLACE HERE IN THE NATION'S CAPITAL...
FENWICK MILITARY ACADEMY

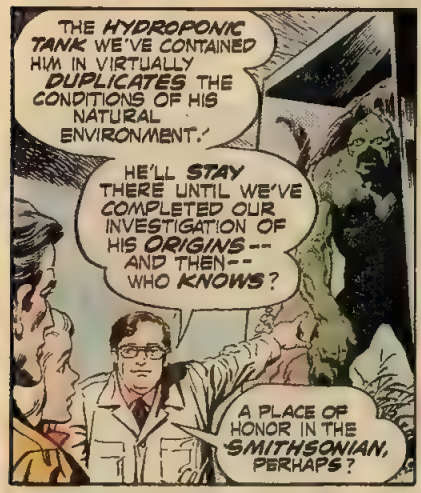

THE BUILDING IS A DORMITORY UNDER REPAIRS, A STRUCTURE THAT IS FAR MORE THAN IT SEEMS...
THE SPEAKERS ARE MATT CABLE, ABIGAIL ARCANE, AND A MAN CALLED JOHN ZERO, WHO IS ALSO FAR MORE THAN HE SEEMS...
...AN EXCELLENT JOB, MATTHEW. THE SECRETARY ASKED ME TO EXTEND HIS CONGRATULATIONS.

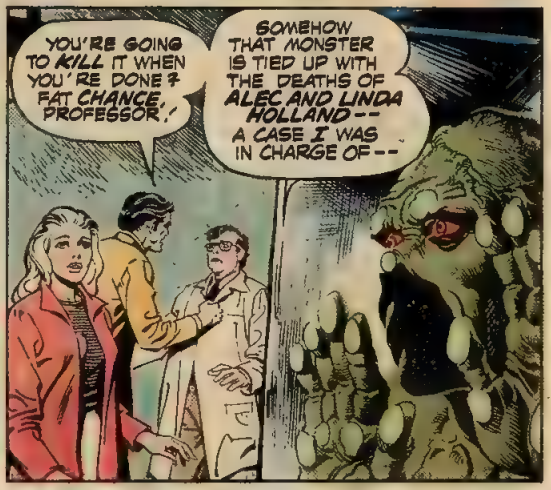

YOU CAN STUFF YOUR CONGRATULATIONS, COMMANDER--UNTIL YOU TELL ME WHAT YOU'VE DONE WITH THE SWAMP THING!
IT'S QUITE ALL RIGHT, MS. ARCANE. MATTHEW'S MONSTER IS IN THE BEST OF HANDS.
MATT, PLEASE--YOU SHOULDN'T TALK TO MR. ZERO THAT WAY!
WE ARE, IN FACT, ON OUR WAY TO VISIT HIM RIGHT NOW.


THE CORRIDOR ENDS IN A SLAB OF STEEL--BUT AS JOHN ZERO PRESSES THE FINGERTIPS OF ONE HAND AGAINST THE COLD, UNYIELDING BARRIER--
--THE RINGING CLANGOR OF LOCK BOLTS FALLING INTO PLACE ECHOES DOWN THE METALLIC HALLWAY...
SILENTLY, THE WALL SLIDES UPWARD--

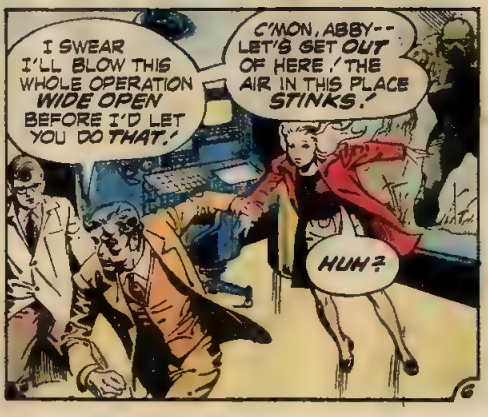
CONTINUED ON 35P PAGE FOLLOWING.


IN GOD'S NAME, DEGREZ-- WHAT ARE YOU DOING TO HIM?
OH... HELLO, CABLE... MISS ARCANE, DON'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR MONSTER. HE'S PERFECTLY SAFE.'


THE HYDROPONIC TANK WE'VE CONTAINED HIM IN VIRTUALLY DUPLICATES THE CONDITIONS OF HIS NATURAL ENVIRONMENT.'
HE'LL STAY THERE UNTIL WE'VE COMPLETED OUR INVESTIGATION OF HIS ORIGINS-- AND THEN-- WHO KNOWS?
A PLACE OF HONOR IN THE SMITHSONIAN, PERHAPS?


YOU'RE GOING TO KILL IT WHEN YOU'RE DONE? FAT CHANCE, PROFESSOR.'
SOMEHOW THAT MONSTER IS TIED UP WITH THE DEATHS OF ALEC AND LINDA HOLLAND-- A CASE I WAS IN CHARGE OF--

--AND IF YOU THINK I'M GONNA LET YOU KISS OFF MY STAR WITNESS BEFORE I GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THAT CASE--
--YOU ARE FLATOUT CRAZY.'

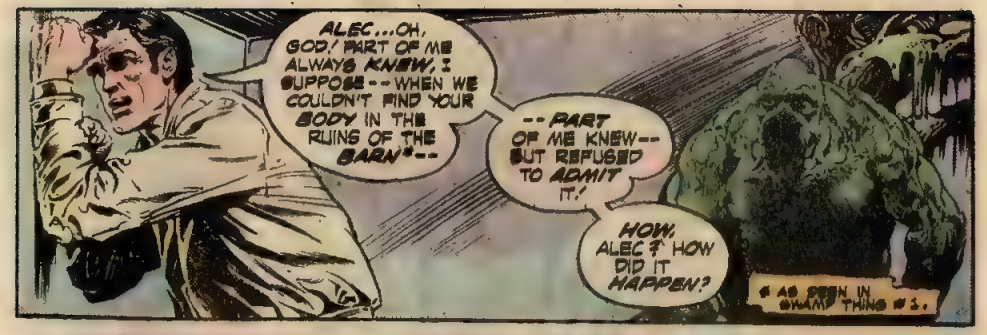

I SWEAR I'LL BLOW THIS WHOLE OPERATION WIDE OPEN BEFORE I'D LET YOU DO THAT.'
C'MON, ABBY-- LET'S GET OUT OF HERE.' THE AIR IN THIS PLACE STINKS.'
HUH?

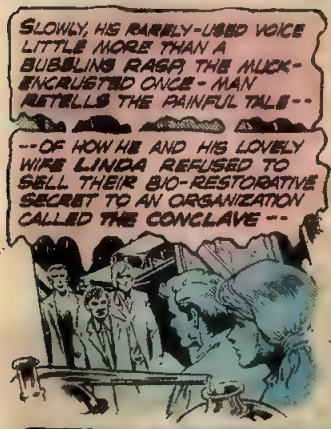
THE STEEL SLAB SLIDES BACK INTO PLACE WITH AN ANGRY CLANG-- AND PROFESSOR COOLIDGE DEGREZ IS LEFT PRACTICALLY ALONE --
-- TO CONTINUE HIS OBSERVATIONS...
PROJECT-- CODE NAME: LEVIATHAN-- REPORT #28-N, CONTINUED...
...THE CREATURE CONTINUES TO INDICATE OBVIOUS SIGNS OF INTELLIGENCE...
IT NOW APPEARS TO BE INVESTIGATING THE PERIMETERS OF ITS CELL--AS IF SEARCHING FOR SOME WEAK POINT-- SOME MEANS OF ESCAPE...
WHAM! WHA
WHA
WHA
WHA
WAIT! THE CREATURE SEEMS TO HAVE FOUND WHAT IT WAS LOOKING FOR!
IT HAS BEGUN TO HAMMER AT A PORTION OF ITS GLASSITE CELL WALL REPEATEDLY-- ATTEMPTING FUTILELY TO SHATTER IT...
NO! THE CREATURE IS FAR STRONGER THAN WE ESTIMATED! IT HAS INCREASED ITS EFFORTS--AND THE GLASS HAS BEGUN TO CRACK!
I MUST DO SOMETHING TO STOP IT BEFORE...
THWA
THWA
THWA
KWARAAM
NO! OH ... NO!!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

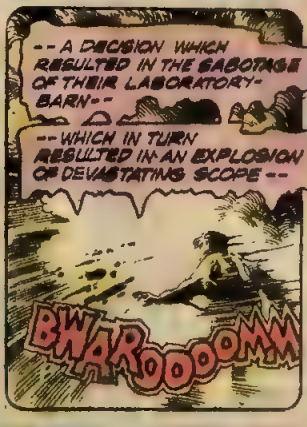
DIDN'T WANT TO HAVE TO DO IT THIS WAY... BUT I HAD NO CHOICE...
CAN'T LET THEM KEEP ME HERE... TO FIND OUT WHAT I KNOW....!
BLAM
DON'T WORRY, PROFESSOR-- WE'LL STOP THIS MONSTER.!
BLAM
BLAM
NO.! STOP SHOOTING.! THE CREATURE MUSTN'T BE HARMED.!
HE'S TOO VALUABLE TO SCIENCE--
DEGRÉZ... YOU FOOL...STAY BACK...!
--TOO VALUAB--
UUNNGG
PROFESSOR--?
OH, MY GOD-- WE'VE SHOT HIM.!
P-PROFESSOR? PROFESSOR... WHAT HAVE WE DONE TO YOU?
YOU'VE KILLED HIM... YOU GIBBERING IDIOT....!
I'M SORRY, DEGRÉZ... I DIDN'T INTEND FOR THINGS TO END THIS WAY....!
NOR DID THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE INTEND TO FALL VICTIM TO-- THIS--
NO...! THAT BLASTED FOAM AGAIN...!
SHU SSI
--BUT NEVERTHELESS-- HE DOES.!
FILTHY MONSTER-- IT'S YOUR FAULT THE PROFESSOR IS DEAD--
--AND, BELIEVE ME--, YOU'RE GONNA PAY FOR IT.!
THUMP
8

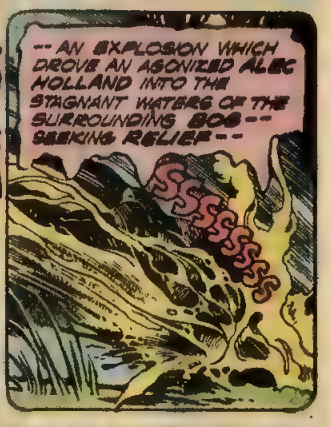
AND BY THE FOLLOWING MORNING...
WE'VE RESTORED THE HYDROPONIC CHAMBER-- AND INSTALLED A SYSTEM OF HIGH-POTENCY LASER BEAMS AROUND IT.
IF THE CREATURE ATTEMPTS A SECOND ESCAPE, IT WILL NEVER ATTEMPT A THIRD!
BY THE WAY, I'M PLACING YOU IN CHARGE OF THE FUNERAL ARRANGEMENTS, MATTHEW--SOMETHING SIMPLE-- INCONSPICUOUS. WE HAVE NO NEED OF PUBLICITY.
I UNDERSTAND, COMMANDER. IN A WAY, I FEEL ALMOST RESPONSIBLE FOR PROFESSOR DEGREZ'S DEATH--
--BUT MAYBE THERE'S SOMETHING I CAN DO TO MAKE UP FOR IT!
MAYBE I CAN FIND THE ANSWERS THAT COST THE PROFESSOR HIS LIFE! MAYBE I CAN LEARN THE SECRET OF THE SWAMP THING!
OH? AND HOW DO YOU PROPOSE TO ACCOMPLISH THAT?
I WANT YOU TO CLEAR EVERYONE OUT OF HERE-- THEN PUT ME IN THERE --SO I CAN TRY TO TALK TO THE SWAMP THING-- ALONE!
ARE YOU SERIOUS, MATTHEW? AFTER YOU'VE SEEN A SAMPLE OF THAT CREATURE'S POWER--?
COMMANDER, THAT "CREATURE" HAS ALSO SAVED MY LIFE MORE TIMES THAN I CAN COUNT.
SOMEHOW, I FIND IT HARD TO BELIEVE THAT IT WOULD HARM ME NOW!
I MAY NOT SHARE YOUR CONFIDENCE, MATTHEW-- BUT NEITHER CAN I ARGUE YOUR SENTIMENTS!
ALL RIGHT, I'LL MAKE ALL THE NECESSARY ARRANGEMENTS-- BUT PLEASE DON'T GIVE ME CAUSE TO REGRET THIS!
9.

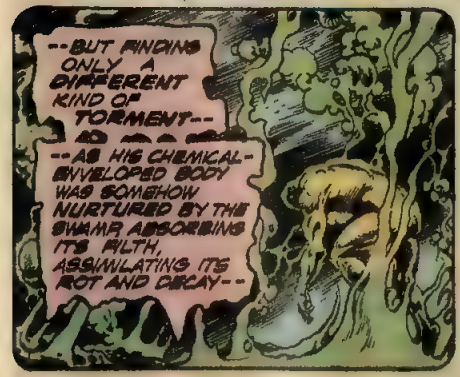
A STUDY IN IRONY: MATT CABLE, CLAD IN CLEAN WHITE COVERALLS TO PROTECT HIS CLOTHING FROM THE BRACKISH ENVIRONMENT THAT COMPOSES THE VERY SUBSTANCE OF THE CREATURE WITH WHOM HE SEEKS SO DESPERATELY TO COMMUNICATE--
--BUT STILL-- HE TRIES...
UH... HI, FELLA... MIND IF I TALK TO YOU A WHILE?
YOU KNOW, YOU'VE CAUSED ME QUITE A BIT A TROUBLE... MAKING ME CHASE YOU ALL ACROSS THE WORLD... THEN POPPING UP UNANNOUNCED ALL THOSE TIMES TO SAVE MY STUPID LIFE...
YOU'VE PUT ME IN YOUR DEBT-- YOU KNOW THAT, DON'T YOU?--AND IT'S A DEBT I DON'T KNOW HOW TO REPAY.'
OH, COME ON, BLAST YOU-- ANSWER ME.' SAY SOMETHING.'
I KNOW YOU'RE INTELLIGENT.' YOU MUST BE ABLE TO SPEAK.'
WHY IN GOD'S NAME DON'T YOU?
DAMN IT-- I'M TRYING TO SAVE YOUR MOSSY HIDE.' SPEAK TO ME.'
I WISH I COULD, MATT... LORD, I WISH I COULD...
...BUT THE SECRET I HOLD... THE SECRET OF THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA... IS TOO DANGEROUS FOR ANYONE ELSE TO LEARN....'
... BUT ON THE OTHER HAND... WHAT CHOICE DO I HAVE...? IF I DON'T CONFIDE IN CABLE... HIS COLLEAGUES WILL SIMPLY KILL ME... AND LEARN THE SECRET BY STUDYING MY CORPSE...'
NO... I HAVE NO CHOICE.../ I MUST TELL CABLE THAT...
I... AM... ALEC... HOLLAND....'
OH... MY... GOD...!
10

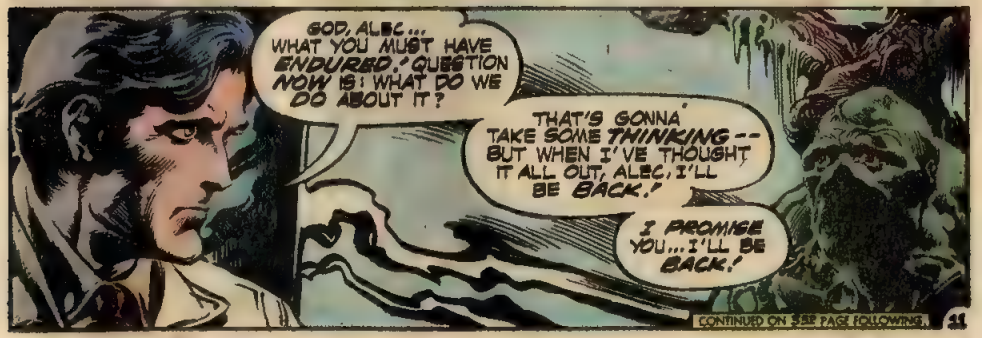

ALEC...OH, GOD,' PART OF ME ALWAYS KNEW, I SUPPOSE--WHEN WE COULDN'T FIND YOUR BODY IN THE RUINS OF THE BARN"--
--PART OF ME KNEW--BUT REFUSED TO ADMIT IT.'
HOW, ALEC? HOW DID IT HAPPEN?
AS SEEN IN SWAMP THING #1.


SLOWLY, HIS RARELY-USED VOICE LITTLE MORE THAN A BUBBLING RASP, THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED ONCE-MAN RETELLS THE PAINFUL TALE--
--OF HOW HE AND HIS LOVELY WIFE LINDA REFUSED TO SELL THEIR BIO-RESTORATIVE SECRET TO AN ORGANIZATION CALLED THE CONCLAVE--


--A DECISION WHICH RESULTED IN THE SABOTAGE OF THEIR LABORATORY-BARN--
--WHICH IN TURN RESULTED IN AN EXPLOSION OF DEVASTATING SCOPE--
BWAARDOOOOMM


--AN EXPLOSION WHICH DROVE AN AGONIZED ALEC HOLLAND INTO THE STAGNANT WATERS OF THE SURROUNDING BOG--SEEKING RELIEF--
SSSSSSS


--BUT FINDING ONLY A DIFFERENT KIND OF TORMENT--
--AS HIS CHEMICAL-ENVELOPED BODY WAS SOMEHOW NURTURED BY THE SWAMP ABSORBING ITS FILTH, ASSIMILATING ITS ROT AND DECAY--

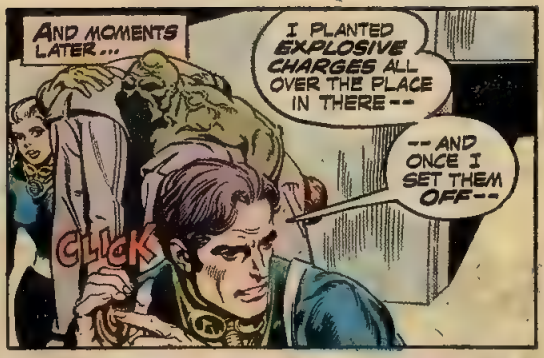

GOD, ALEC... WHAT YOU MUST HAVE ENDURED.' QUESTION NOW IS: WHAT DO WE DO ABOUT IT?
THAT'S GONNA TAKE SOME THINKING--BUT WHEN I'VE THOUGHT IT ALL OUT, ALEC, I'LL BE BACK.'
I PROMISE YOU... I'LL BE BACK.'

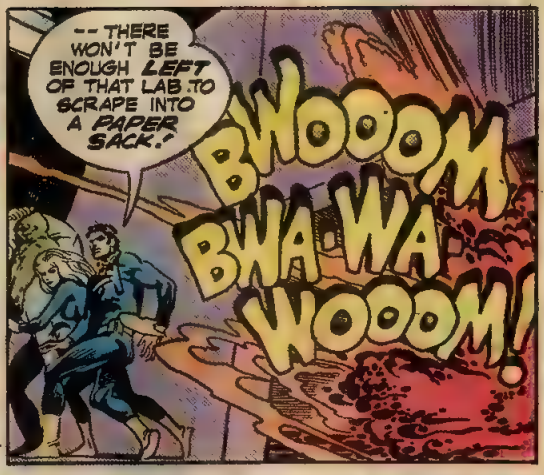
CONTINUED ON SEE PAGE FOLLOWING.

SHORTLY, IN THE SIMPLE APARTMENT OF LT. MATT CABLE...
AND THAT'S THE WHOLE STORY, ABBY-- JUST LIKE ALEC TOLD IT TO ME--
--AND, FRANKLY, I--I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO.!
WE SPENT SO MUCH EFFORT IN CAPTURING HIM-- ONLY TO HAVE IT ALL TURN SOUR.!
HOW CAN WE LEAVE HIM THERE, ABBY? I OWE HIM MY LIFE.!
WE BOTH OWE HIM OUR LIVES!
IF IT WEREN'T FOR ALEC, THE PATCHWORK MAN... THAT CRAZY WEREWOLF... THAT ROBOT FREAK FROM THE CONCLAVE... THE ALIEN... THOSE HIDEOUS WORMS*.
...ANY ONE OF THEM MIGHT HAVE FINISHED US.!
* AS SEEN IN PREVIOUS ISSUES OF THIS MAGAZINE.
AFTER ALL OF THAT, ABBY-- HOW IN GOD'S GOOD NAME CAN I JUST LEAVE HIM TO THE "TENDER" MERCIES OF THE GOVERNMENT?
YOU KNOW THE ANSWER TO THAT FAR BETTER THAN I DO, MATTHEW.
DO WHAT YOUR HEART TELLS YOU TO DO!
TELL ME, ABBY... WHAT SHOULD I DO?
THEN IT'S SETTLED, ABBY.! I DON'T KNOW HOW YET-- BUT I'M GONNA GET HIM OUT OF THERE--
--OR DIE TRYING.!
12

THUS, SHORTLY AFTER MIDNIGHT...
YOU KNOW YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE, ABBY! THIS IS SOMETHING I HAVE TO DO--BUT I'D NEVER FORGIVE MYSELF IF ANYTHING HAPPENED TO YOU!
I KNOW, MATTHEW--BUT THIS IS SOMETHING I MUST DO AS WELL! YOU'VE SUFFERED ALONE FOR FAR TOO LONG!
WHATEVER HAPPENS TONIGHT... I WANT TO BE WITH YOU!
I APPRECIATE THAT, ABBY--BUT I ONLY HOPE YOU DON'T COME TO REGRET IT--
--'CAUSE IF THIS PLASTOID GLOVE I DEVISED TO DUPLICATE CMMR. ZERO'S FINGERPRINTS WORKS--
--YOU MAY BE FOLLOWING ME STRAIGHT INTO HELL!
PLASTI-GLOVED FINGERS TOUCH STEEL--HIDDEN SENSORS RECOGNIZE FAMILIAR FINGERPRINTS--
--AND ONCE MORE THE WALL SLIDES UPWARDS--
--AS A STERILE LABORATORY SUDDENLY BECOMES A BLAZING BATTLEGROUND...
WHUMP
WHAT IN--?
IT'S... KNOCK-OUT GAS!
AND WHILE THE FAST-ACTING FUMES PULL THE GUARDS DOWN TO OBLIVION...
--WELL, DON'T JUST STAND THERE GAWKING, ALEC--GET BACK TO THE FAR SIDE OF YOUR CAGE--BACK OUT OF HARM'S WAY--
--'CAUSE, MISTER, WE'VE COME TO BUST YOU OUT OF HERE--
BWAM
OOM
--AND WE HAVEN'T GOT TIME TO WASTE!
13

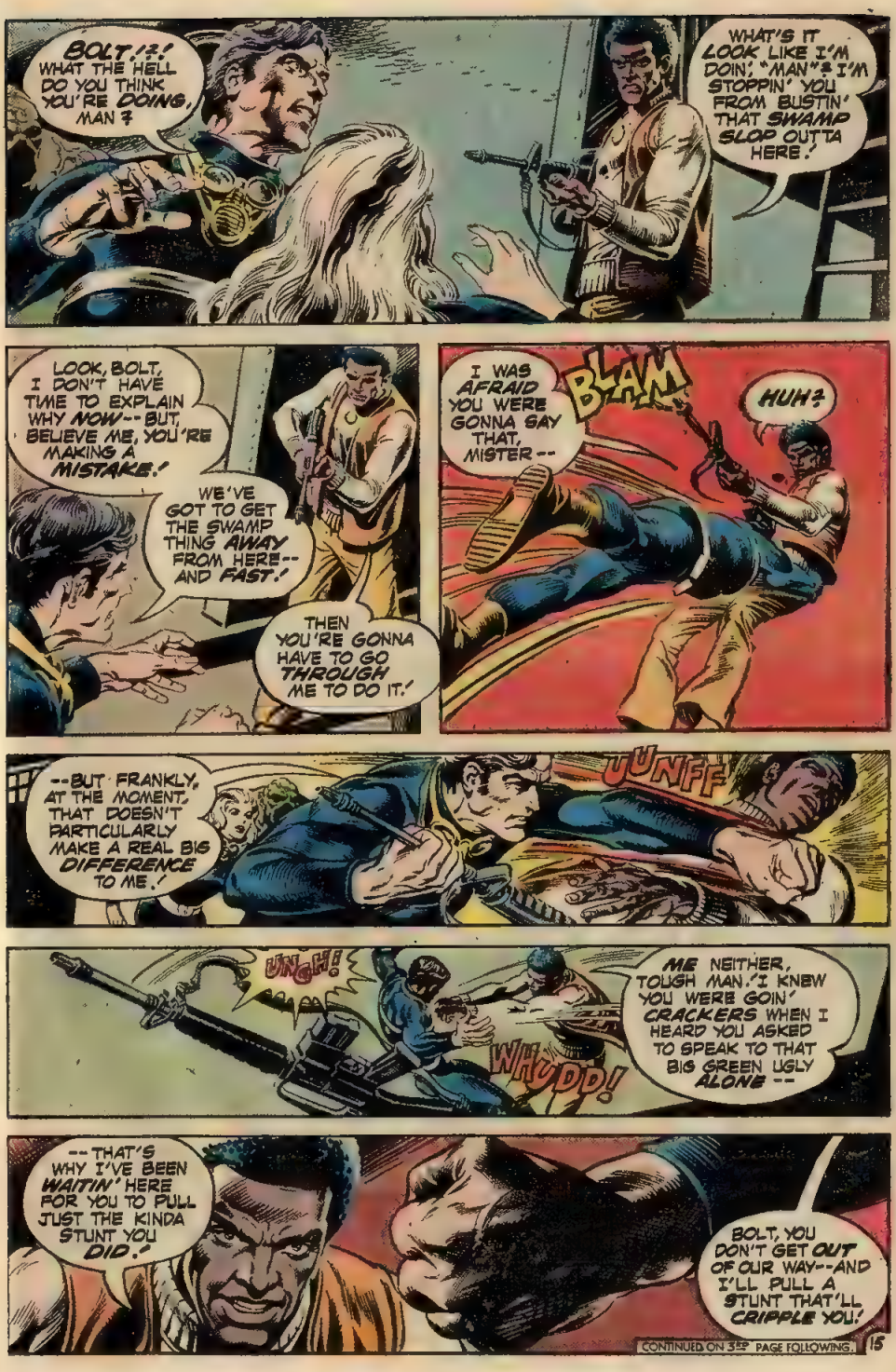
OKAY, LET'S MOVE IT.' ALEC, PICK UP THOSE GUARDS AND GET 'EM OUTTA HERE.' ABBY, DO WHAT YOU CAN TO HELP HIM!
I'VE STILL GOT A FEW THINGS TO TAKE CARE OF.'
WHATEVER YOU SAY, MATTHEW.'


AND MOMENTS LATER...
I PLANTED EXPLOSIVE CHARGES ALL OVER THE PLACE IN THERE--
--AND ONCE I SET THEM OFF--
CLICK


--THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH LEFT OF THAT LAB TO SCRAPE INTO A PAPER SACK.'
BWOOOM
BWA-WA
WOOOM!

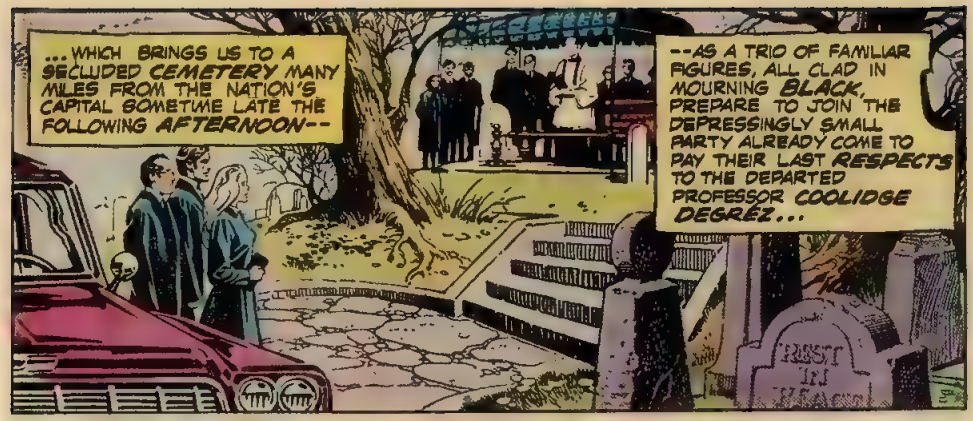
THE HEAT WILL QUICKLY FUSE THOSE STEEL DOORS SHUT-- AND BY THE TIME THEY MANAGE TO BREAK IN, ALL THEY'LL FIND IS-- ASHES!
CLANG
I'M HOPING THEY'LL FIGURE THAT SOME OF THOSE ASHES ARE YOU, ALEC!

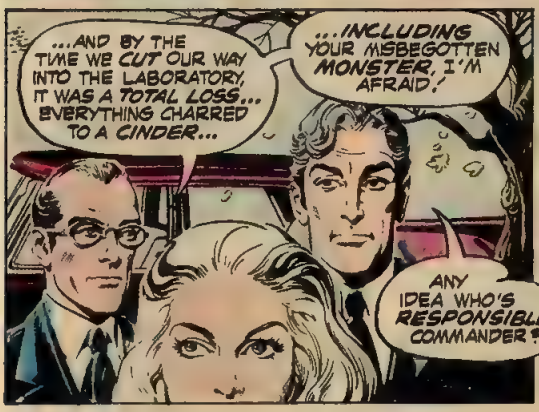
IF THEY THINK YOU'RE DEAD, THE PRESSURE WILL BE OFF AND WE CAN...
OKAY-- HOLD IT-- RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE.'
WHO--? OH, NO--NOT YOU.'

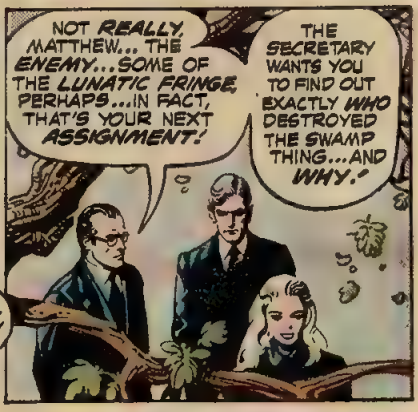

BOLT,!?! WHAT THE HELL DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING, MAN?
WHAT'S IT LOOK LIKE I'M DOIN', "MAN"? I'M STOPPIN' YOU FROM BUSTIN' THAT SWAMP SLOP OUTTA HERE!
LOOK, BOLT, I DON'T HAVE TIME TO EXPLAIN WHY NOW-- BUT, BELIEVE ME, YOU'RE MAKING A MISTAKE!
WE'VE GOT TO GET THE SWAMP THING AWAY FROM HERE-- AND FAST!
THEN YOU'RE GONNA HAVE TO GO THROUGH ME TO DO IT!
I WAS AFRAID YOU WERE GONNA SAY THAT, MISTER --
BLAM!
HUH?
--BUT FRANKLY, AT THE MOMENT, THAT DOESN'T PARTICULARLY MAKE A REAL BIG DIFFERENCE TO ME!
UNFF
UNGH!
WHUDD!
ME NEITHER, TOUGH MAN! I KNEW YOU WERE GOIN' CRACKERS WHEN I HEARD YOU ASKED TO SPEAK TO THAT BIG GREEN UGLY ALONE --
-- THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN WAITIN' HERE FOR YOU TO PULL JUST THE KINDA STUNT YOU DID!
BOLT, YOU DON'T GET OUT OF OUR WAY--AND I'LL PULL A STUNT THAT'LL CRIPPLE YOU!

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

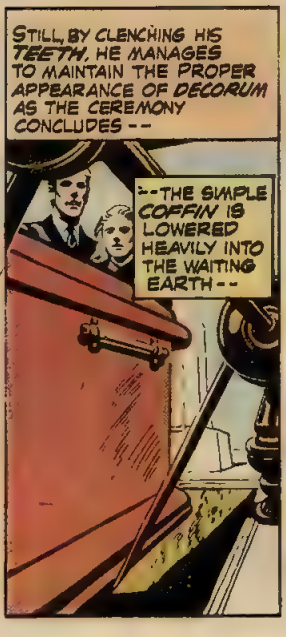
I MEAN IT, MISTER -- STEP ASIDE OR I'LL WALK RIGHT OVER YOU!
THEN YOU JUST COME AHEAD AND TRY, SO I CAN...
ENOUGH...?!
WHAT IN THE--?
SWEET MOTHER O' MERCY,' THAT-- THAT THING TALKS-- ALMOST AS IF IT WAS A HUMAN.'
HE IS HUMAN -- MORE THAN HUMAN -- BUT THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN TRYING TO TELL YOU--
-- BUT I DON'T REALLY HAVE THE RIGHT TO TELL YOU... UNLESS...?
THE SWAMP THING NODS HIS MOSSY HEAD IN SILENT SOMBER ASSENT...
...AND ONCE MORE MATT CABLE RELATES THE ASTONISHING TALE HE HIMSELF HAD FIRST HEARD ONLY HOURS BEFORE...
AND WHEN, AT LAST, HE IS DONE...
FAIR FREAKIN' OUT! BUT I BELIEVE IT--SOMEHOW I BELIEVE IT.'
THEN WILL YOU HELP US? THAT'S ALL THAT REALLY MATTERS NOW.'
I MUST BE AS SCREWY AS THE REST OF YOU-- 'CAUSE THE ANSWER IS YES.'
JUST TELL ME WHAT YOU WANT ME TO DO.'
AND IN CAREFUL, MEASURED TONES, A RELIEVED MATT CABLE EXPLAINS WHAT HE HAS PLANNED...


...WHICH BRINGS US TO A SECLUDED CEMETERY MANY MILES FROM THE NATION'S CAPITAL SOMETIME LATE THE FOLLOWING AFTERNOON--
--AS A TRIO OF FAMILIAR FIGURES, ALL CLAD IN MOURNING BLACK, PREPARE TO JOIN THE DEPRESSINGLY SMALL PARTY ALREADY COME TO PAY THEIR LAST RESPECTS TO THE DEPARTED PROFESSOR COOLIDGE DEGREZ...
REST IN PEACE


...AND BY THE TIME WE CUT OUR WAY INTO THE LABORATORY, IT WAS A TOTAL LOSS... EVERYTHING CHARRED TO A CINDER...
...INCLUDING YOUR MISBEGOTTEN MONSTER, I'M AFRAID!
ANY IDEA WHO'S RESPONSIBLE, COMMANDER?


NOT REALLY, MATTHEW... THE ENEMY...SOME OF THE LUNATIC FRINGE, PERHAPS...IN FACT, THAT'S YOUR NEXT ASSIGNMENT!
THE SECRETARY WANTS YOU TO FIND OUT EXACTLY WHO DESTROYED THE SWAMP THING...AND WHY.

THE SERVICES ARE OVERLY SOLEMN BUT THANKFULLY SHORT--WHICH IS FORTUNATE FOR MATTHEW CABLE, WHO FINDS HIMSELF HARD-PRESSED TO KEEP FROM SMILING SMUGLY DURING THE MINISTER'S SERMON--
--FOR HE ALREADY KNOWS PRECISELY WHAT THE RESULTS OF HIS INVESTIGATION WILL BE...


STILL, BY CLENCHING HIS TEETH, HE MANAGES TO MAINTAIN THE PROPER APPEARANCE OF DECORUM AS THE CEREMONY CONCLUDES --
--THE SIMPLE COFFIN IS LOWERED HEAVILY INTO THE WAITING EARTH--

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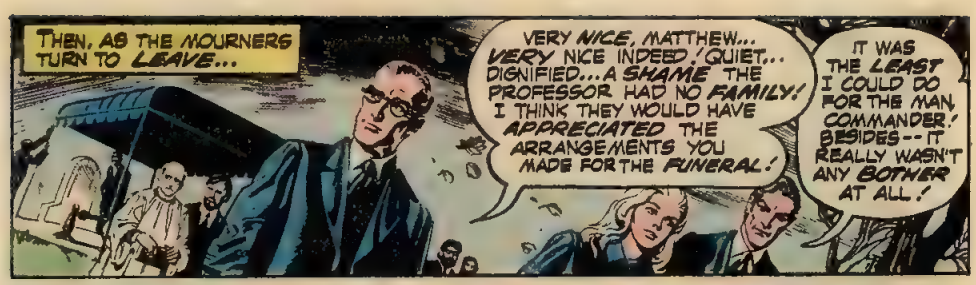
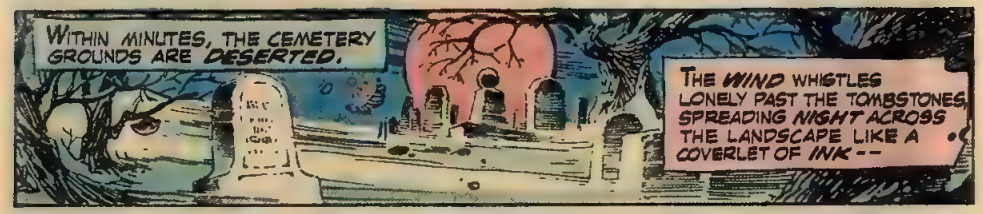
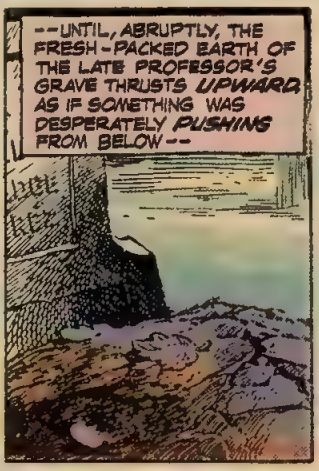
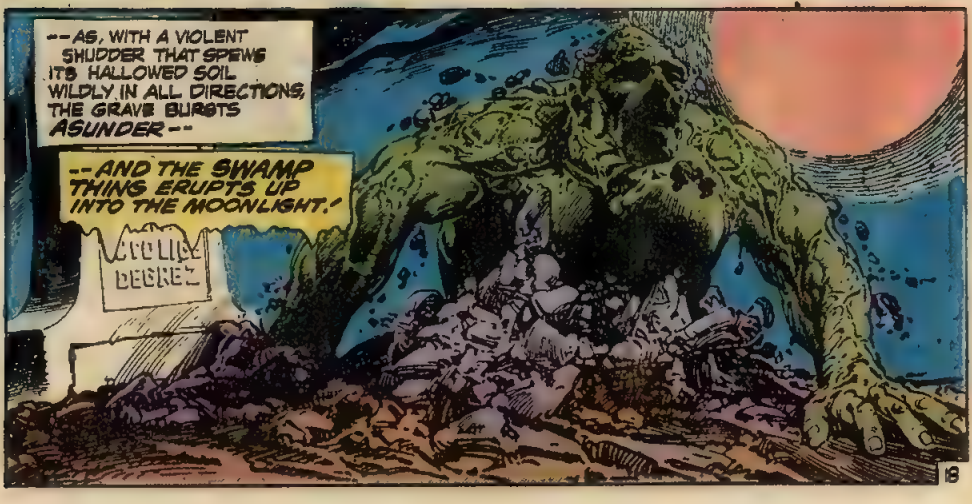

THEN, AS THE MOURNERS TURN TO LEAVE...
VERY NICE, MATTHEW... VERY NICE INDEED, QUIET... DIGNIFIED... A SHAME THE PROFESSOR HAD NO FAMILY! I THINK THEY WOULD HAVE APPRECIATED THE ARRANGEMENTS YOU MADE FOR THE FUNERAL!
IT WAS THE LEAST I COULD DO FOR THE MAN, COMMANDER! BESIDES -- IT REALLY WASN'T ANY BOTHER AT ALL!


WITHIN MINUTES, THE CEMETERY GROUNDS ARE DESERTED.
THE WIND WHISTLES LONELY PAST THE TOMBSTONES, SPREADING NIGHT ACROSS THE LANDSCAPE LIKE A COVERLET OF INK --

-- AND, FOR A TIME, NOTHING MOVES -- NOTHING BREATHES -- IN THIS KINGDOM OF THE DEAD --
HERE LIES


-- UNTIL, ABRUPTLY, THE FRESH-PACKED EARTH OF THE LATE PROFESSOR'S GRAVE THRUSTS UPWARD, AS IF SOMETHING WAS DESPERATELY PUSHING FROM BELOW --

-- SOMETHING THAT QUICKLY BECOMES RECOGNIZABLE AS A MOSSY ROOT-GNARLED HAND, CLAWING AWAY THE DIRT, STRAINING VAINLY FOR THE SKY --


-- AS, WITH A VIOLENT SHUDDER THAT SPEWS ITS HALLOWED SOIL WILDLY IN ALL DIRECTIONS, THE GRAVE BURSTS ASUNDER --
-- AND THE SWAMP THING ERUPTS UP INTO THE MOONLIGHT!

THAT MAY HAVE JUST BEEN THE TIGHTEST SQUEEZE OF MY LIFE... HIDING IN THE SPECIAL COFFIN CABLE HAD MADE... WEDGED INTO THE FALSE BOTTOM UNDER DEGREZ'S BODY...
...BUT I HAVE TO GIVE MATTHEW CREDIT... IT WORKED...!
IT TOOK A WHILE TO DIG MY WAY UP THROUGH SIX FEET OF DIRT BARE-HANDED... BUT I GUESS IT WAS WORTH IT... SINCE IT GOT ME OUT OF WASHINGTON... WITHOUT BEING NOTICED...!
ALL I HAVE TO DO NOW IS... RENDEZVOUS WITH CABLE AND HIS FRIENDS... THEN...
THE SWAMP THING STOPS SUDDENLY, FAIRLY ROOTED IN HIS TRACKS--AS HIS RHEUMY, RED-RIMMED EYES BEHOLD A SIGHT HE'D HOPED NEVER TO SEE--
--A PAIR OF HEADSTONES--
-- ENSCRIBED WITH A PAIR OF UNBEARABLY FAMILIAR NAMES...
IN MEMORY OF ALEC HOLLAND
IN MEMORY OF LINDA HOLLAND
NO...OH, NO...MY OWN GRAVE...AND LINDA'S... DARLING LINDA'S...!
OH, GOD, LINDA... WHAT DID I DO TO YOU...?
IT'S MY FAULT YOU'RE DEAD...! ME... AND MY DAMNED DEDICATION TO DUTY...!
THERE WERE SO MANY THINGS I MEANT TO TELL YOU, LINDA... SO MANY PLANS WE NEVER MADE... SO MANY DREAMS WE NEVER REALIZED...
...ALL MY FAULT...!
IF THERE IS TRULY A HEAVEN, SWEET LINDA... I PRAY TO GOD YOU'RE HAPPY THERE...
...AND THERE MUST BE A HEAVEN... BECAUSE I KNOW THERE IS A HELL...!
I'M LIVING IN THAT HELL RIGHT NOW...!

WELL...I'D BETTER GET GOING...! CABLE AND THE OTHERS WILL BE WAITING FOR ME...WAITING TO...
...WAITING TO DO... WHAT...?
WHO IN HELL DO I THINK I'M KIDDING...? THERE'S NOTHING CABLE CAN DO FOR ME... NOTHING...EXCEPT MAYBE PITY ME... OR COME TO SHARE MY CURSE...
...AND MATT CABLE IS TOO FINE A MAN TO DESERVE A FATE LIKE THAT...!
IT'S TIME I FINALLY ADMITTED IT... THERE'S NO PLACE IN THIS WORLD FOR SOMETHING LIKE ME...! ALL I CAN DO IS DRAG OTHERS DOWN AS WELL... AND I'M NOT GOING TO DO THAT...!
NO... IT'S TIME THIS LITTLE MONSTER WENT... HOME...!
AND, HIS MOSSY SHOULDERS STOOPED FROM THE HEAVY EMOTIONAL BURDEN HE BEARS, THE SWAMP THING SHAMBLES GRIMLY THROUGH THE NIGHT--
--UNTIL, AT LAST, HE REACHES THE STAGNANT MARSH HE SARDONICALLY CALLS HOME...
IT IS ONLY THE SWAMP THAT IS KIND TO HIM NOW-- IT IS ONLY THE SWAMP THAT CARES...
FOR A MOMENT, HE PAUSES--REMEMBERING LINDA--REMEMBERING THE MAN HE USED TO BE--
--AND IF TEARS COULD COME...THEY WOULD.
THE END
20

NEXT: THE TOMORROW CHILDREN

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE SECOND WEEK IN OCTOBER

THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
SWAMP THING
THE VERY BEST
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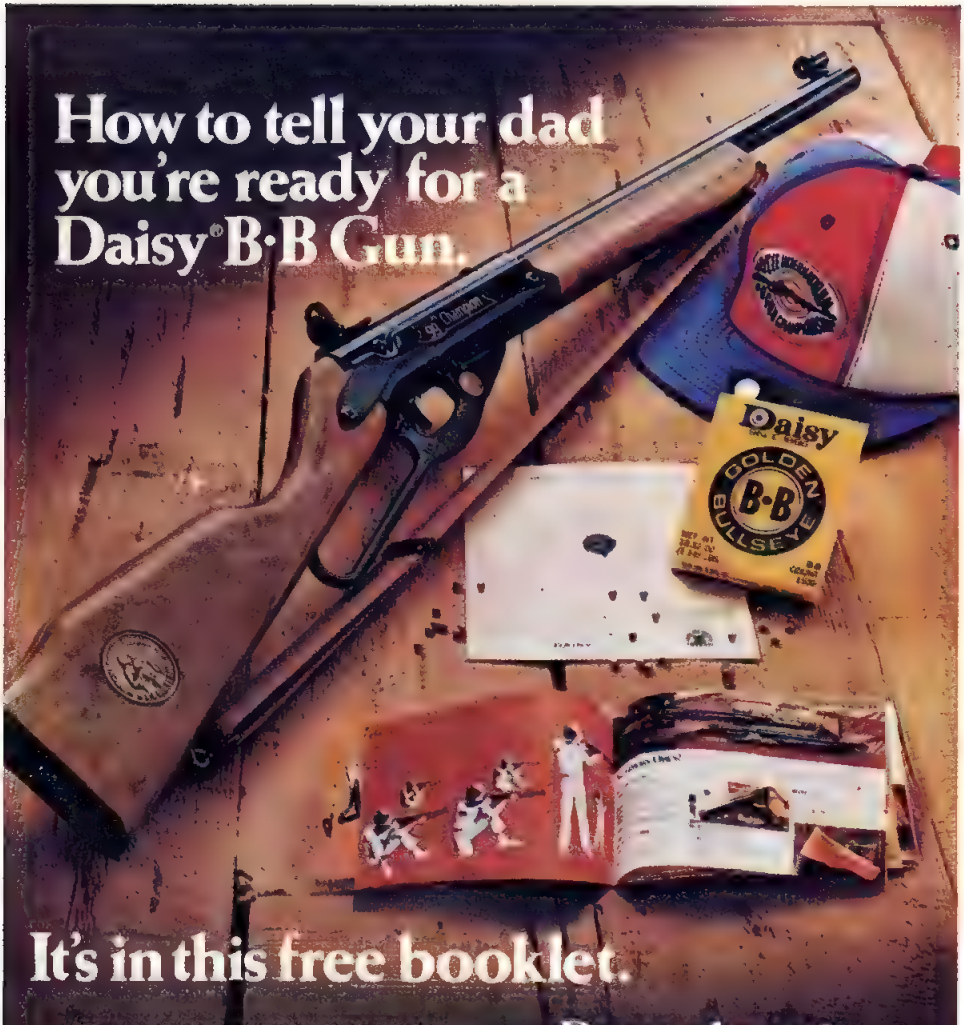
How to tell your dad you're ready for a Daisy® B·B Gun.



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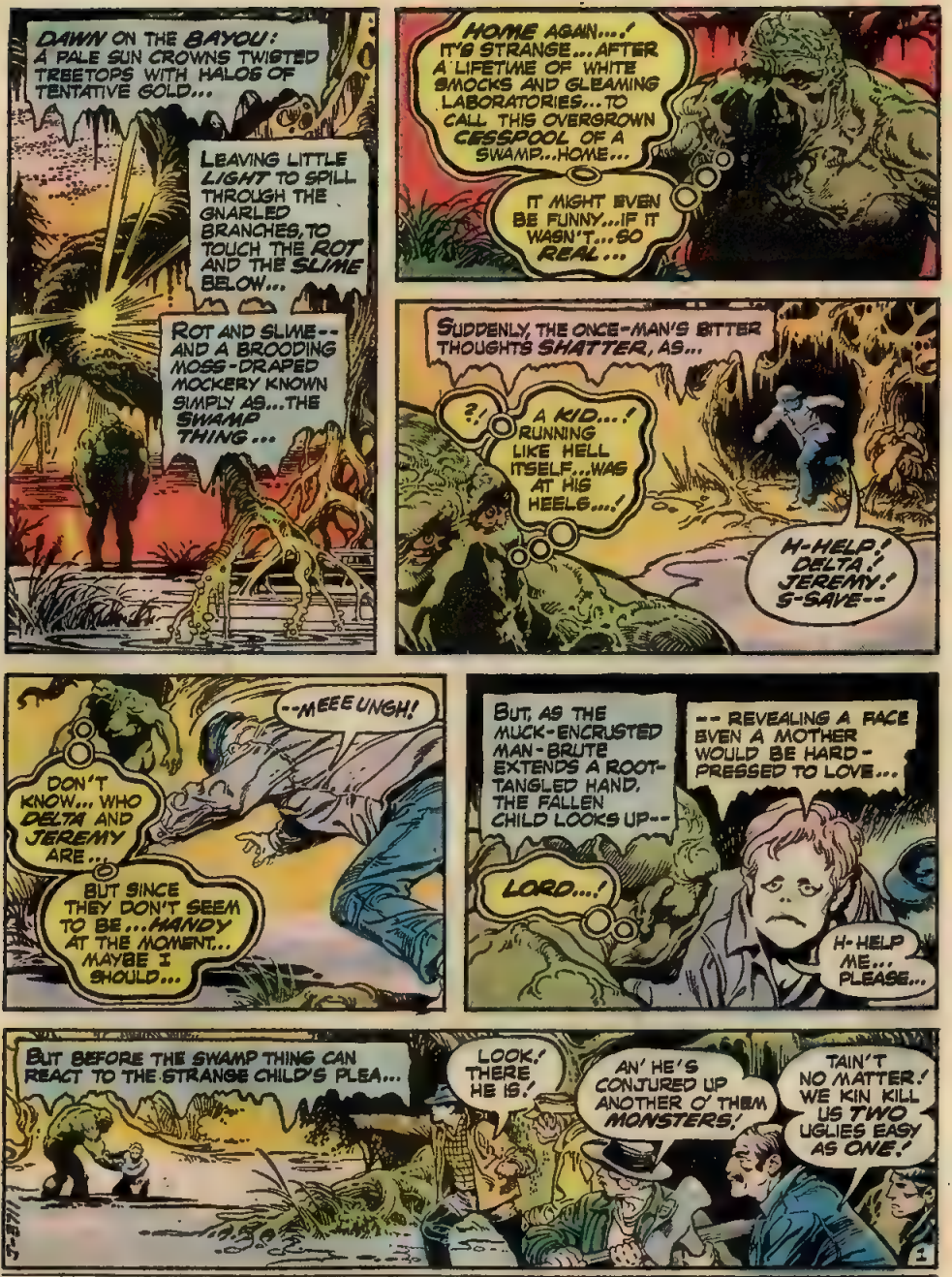
DAWN ON THE BAYOU: A PALE SUN CROWNS TWISTED TREETOPS WITH HALOS OF TENTATIVE GOLD...
LEAVING LITTLE LIGHT TO SPILL THROUGH THE GNARLED BRANCHES, TO TOUCH THE ROT AND THE SLIME BELOW...
ROT AND SLIME--AND A BROODING MOSS-DRAPED MOCKERY KNOWN SIMPLY AS...THE SWAMP THING...
HOME AGAIN...! IT'S STRANGE...AFTER A LIFETIME OF WHITE SMOCKS AND GLEAMING LABORATORIES...TO CALL THIS OVERGROWN CESSPOOL OF A SWAMP...HOME...
IT MIGHT EVEN BE FUNNY...IF IT WASN'T...SO REAL...
SUDDENLY, THE ONCE-MAN'S BITTER THOUGHTS SHATTER, AS...
?!
A KID...! RUNNING LIKE HELL ITSELF...WAS AT HIS HEELS...!
H-HELP! DELTA! JEREMY! S-SAVE--
--MEEE UNGH!
DON'T KNOW... WHO DELTA AND JEREMY ARE...
BUT SINCE THEY DON'T SEEM TO BE...HANDY AT THE MOMENT... MAYBE I SHOULD...
BUT, AS THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MAN-BRUTE EXTENDS A ROOT-TANGLED HAND, THE FALLEN CHILD LOOKS UP--
LORD...!
-- REVEALING A FACE EVEN A MOTHER WOULD BE HARD-PRESSED TO LOVE...
H-HELP ME... PLEASE...
BUT BEFORE THE SWAMP THING CAN REACT TO THE STRANGE CHILD'S PLEA...
LOOK! THERE HE IS!
AN' HE'S CONJURED UP ANOTHER O' THEM MONSTERS!
TAIN'T NO MATTER! WE KIN KILL US TWO UGLIES EASY AS ONE!
1

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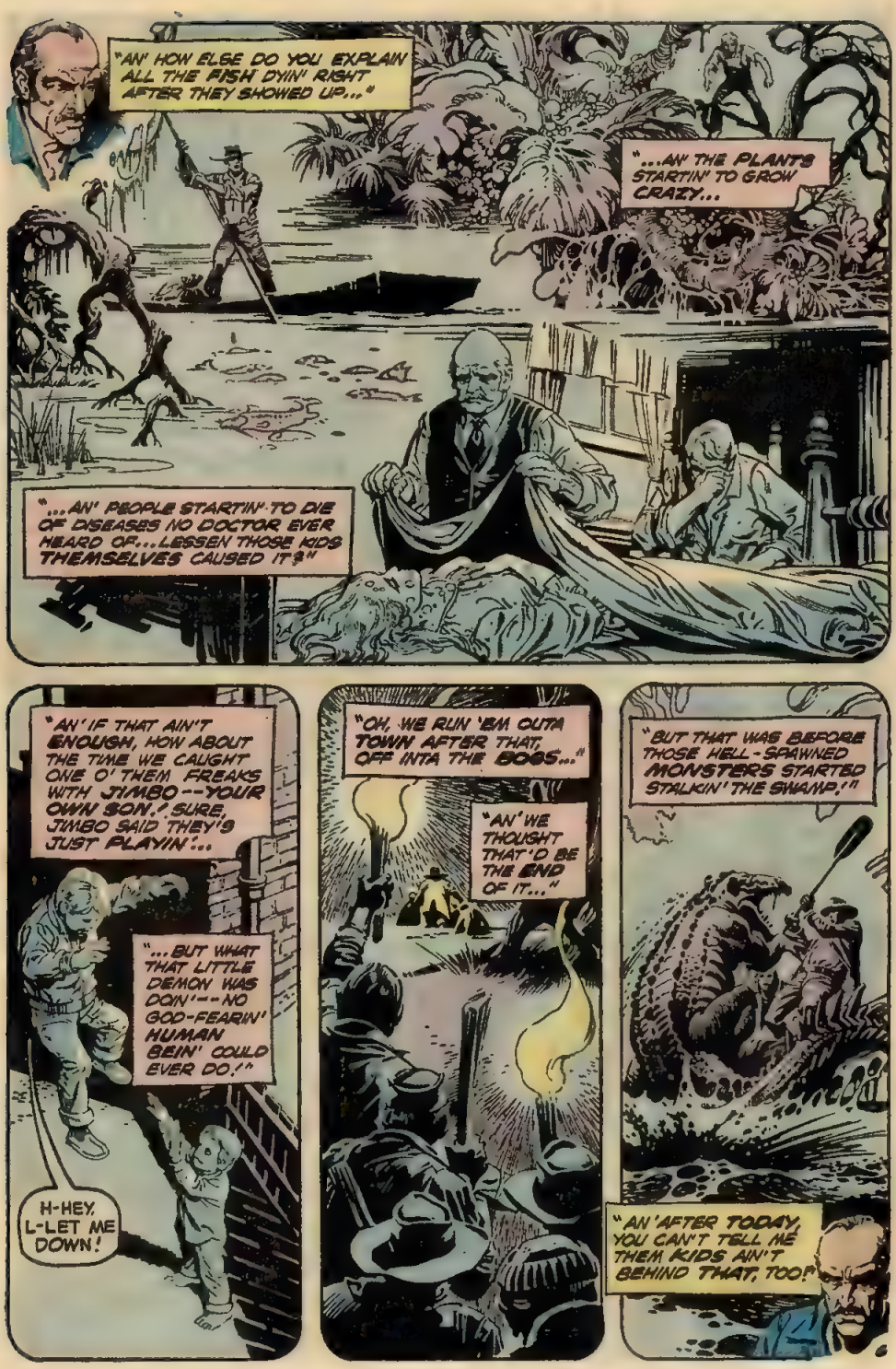
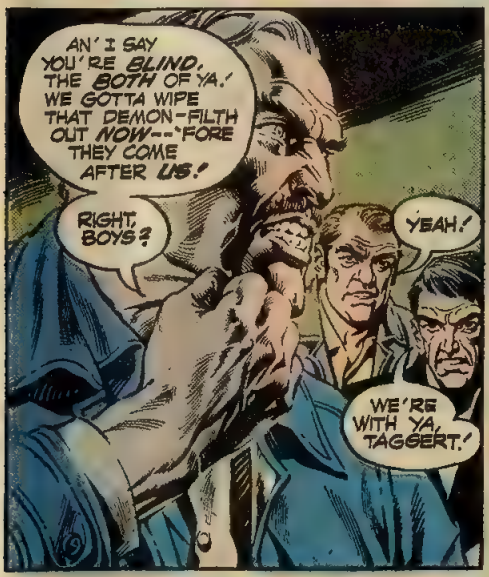
IT IS SAID THAT NATURE IS CRUEL. BUT NATURE SPAWNS NO ANIMAL MORE VICIOUS, NO CREATURE MORE VILE, THAN THAT MINDLESS FLOCK OF HUMANITY CALLED... A MOB.!
YES, THE SWAMP THING KNOWS WELL...
JUST AS HE KNOWS HE MUST SOMEHOW PROTECT THE WHIMPERING CHILD-THING THIS MOB SEEKS TO DESTROY...
SWAMP THING
CUT THE BIG 'UN DOWN TO SEE FIRST, BOYS! WE CAN TAKE CARE O' THE LITTLE FREAK LATER!
DON'T KNOW... WHAT THAT KID'S DONE... BUT I GET THE FEELING THESE GOOD CITIZENS... JUST DON'T LIKE HIS LOOKS...
AND BEING SOMETHING LESS... THAN AN ADONIS MYSELF...
THAT KINDA MAKES ME... MAD...!
"THE TOMORROW CHILDREN"
A DAVID MICHELINIE - NESTOR REDONDO - JOE CALAMDO PRESENTATION
(WRITER) (ILLUSTRATOR) (EDITOR)
2

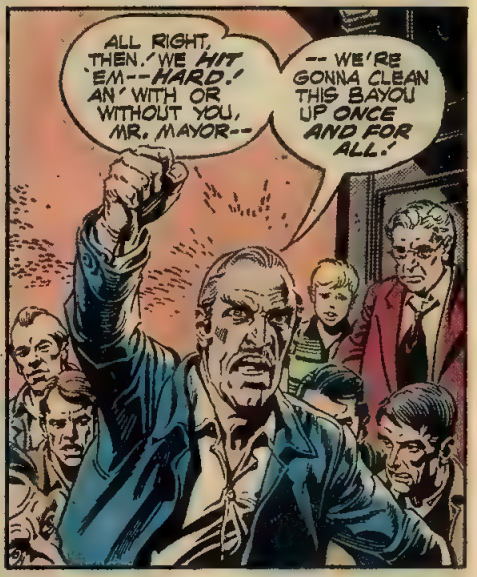
ANGER: A MOST HUMAN EMOTION...
AND A MOST DEADLY WEAPON... IN AN UNHUMAN FORM...
KWUMP
SORRY I CAN'T... PLAY ANY LONGER...
BUT I'VE BETTER THINGS TO DO... THAN TO LET WITLESS MORONS... USE ME FOR A CHOPPING BLOCK...
SO I THINK I'LL JUST... END THIS LITTLE GAME...
SHLORP
LORDY, TAGGERT! H-HE'S EVEN STRONGER THAN THE OTHER ONES! WE'LL NEVER TAKE HIM!
...RIGHT NOW!
KRUNCH!
GEEEAGH!
MAYBE YER RIGHT, ELTON! BACK OFF, BOYS!
AND AS THE DISPIRITED ATTACKERS SLINK OFF TO LICK THEIR WOUNDS...
YOU'VE WON THIS ROUND, MONSTER! BUT WE'LL BE BACK! I SWEAR IT!
AT LEAST NOW... MAYBE I CAN GET SOME ANSWERS... FROM MY LITTLE "FRIEND" HERE... AND--
HUH?
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.
4

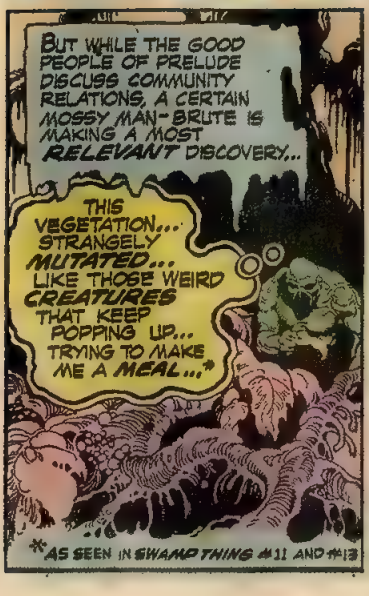
THE KID... MUST'VE RUN OFF... DURING THE FIGHT...
SERVES ME RIGHT, I GUESS... I SHOULD KNOW BETTER BY NOW... THAN TO EXPECT EXPLANATIONS...
THOUGH A "THANK YOU"... MIGHT BE NICE... JUST ONCE...
BUT EVEN SELF-PITYING MONSTERS ARE ENTITLED TO THEIR MOMENTS OF PRIVACY--AND SO WE TAKE OUR LEAVE OF THE SHAMBLING SWAMP BEAST--
--AND MOVE TO THE NEARBY VILLAGE OF PRELUDE, LOUISIANA--
--A ONCE-PEACEFUL FISHING COMMUNITY NOW MORE LIKE SOME MEDIEVAL BASTION LOCKED IN A DARK AND FEARSOME SIEGE...
YOU'VE SEEN THE KIND O' BEASTS THEY GOT PROTECTIN' 'EM, MAYOR,' WHAT MORE DO YA WANT?
BROOM TAGGERT.' WE CAN'T KNOW FOR SURE IT'S THE WHEELER KIDS BEHIND ALL THIS!
SURE WE CAN,' THEY'S DIFFERENT, AIN'T THEY? THEM KIDS JUST AIN'T LIKE THE REST OF US!
"REMEMBER THE DAY JEB WHEELER FIRST BROUGHT 'EM INTO TOWN, SLINKIN' IN LIKE SOMETHIN' OUTA ONE O'THEM LOW BUDGET MONSTER MOVIES?"
"WHY, IT MADE MY GUT CRAWL JUSTA LOOK AT 'EM."


"AN' HOW ELSE DO YOU EXPLAIN ALL THE FISH DYIN' RIGHT AFTER THEY SHOWED UP..."
"...AN' THE PLANTS STARTIN' TO GROW CRAZY...
"...AN' PEOPLE STARTIN' TO DIE OF DISEASES NO DOCTOR EVER HEARD OF...LESSEN THOSE KIDS THEMSELVES CAUSED IT?"
"AN' IF THAT AIN'T ENOUGH, HOW ABOUT THE TIME WE CAUGHT ONE O' THEM FREAKS WITH JIMBO--YOUR OWN SON,? SURE, JIMBO SAID 'THEY'S JUST PLAYIN'...
"...BUT WHAT THAT LITTLE DEMON WAS DOIN'--NO GOD-FEARIN' HUMAN BEIN' COULD EVER DO,!"
H-HEY, L-LET ME DOWN!
"OH, WE RUN 'EM OUTA TOWN AFTER THAT, OFF INTA THE WOODS..."
"AN' WE THOUGHT THAT 'D BE THE END OF IT..."
"BUT THAT WAS BEFORE THOSE HELL-SPAWNED MONSTERS STARTED STALKIN' THE SWAMP,!"
"AN' AFTER TODAY, YOU CAN'T TELL ME THEM KIDS AIN'T BEHIND THAT, TOO!"

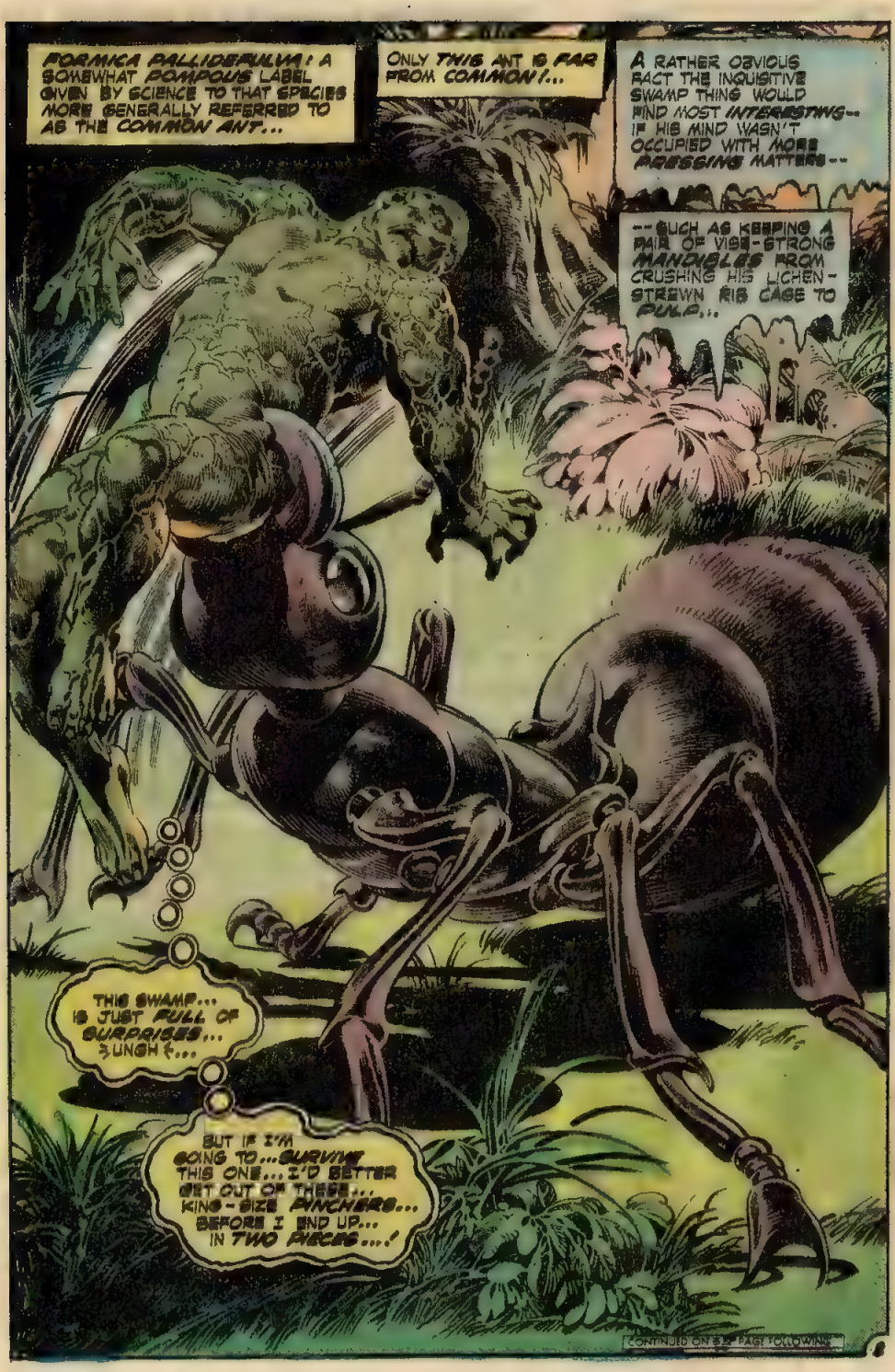
NOW, RAFE, WE GOT NO PROOF OF THAT.' YOU CAN'T GO AND DAMN SOMEONE JUST 'CAUSE THEY LOOK A BIT STRANGE!'
YEAH, MR. TAGGERT.' THEY'S MY FRIENDS.' THEY AIN'T BAD.'


AN' I SAY YOU'RE BLIND. THE BOTH OF YA.' WE GOTTA WIPE THAT DEMON-FILTH OUT NOW--'FORE THEY COME AFTER US!
RIGHT, BOYS?
YEAH!
WE'RE WITH YA, TAGGERT.'

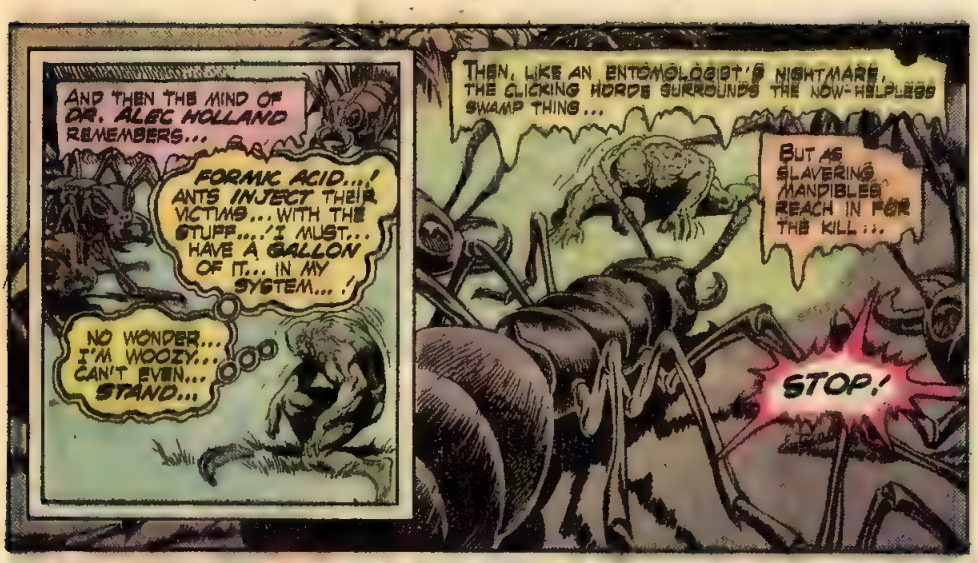

ALL RIGHT, THEN.' WE HIT 'EM--HARD.' AN' WITH OR WITHOUT YOU, MR. MAYOR--
-- WE'RE GONNA CLEAN THIS BAYOU UP ONCE AND FOR ALL.'


BUT WHILE THE GOOD PEOPLE OF PRELUDE DISCUSS COMMUNITY RELATIONS, A CERTAIN MOSSY MAN-BRUTE IS MAKING A MOST RELEVANT DISCOVERY...
THIS VEGETATION... STRANGELY MUTATED... LIKE THOSE WEIRD CREATURES THAT KEEP POPPING UP... TRYING TO MAKE ME A MEAL...*
*AS SEEN IN SWAMP THING #11 AND #13

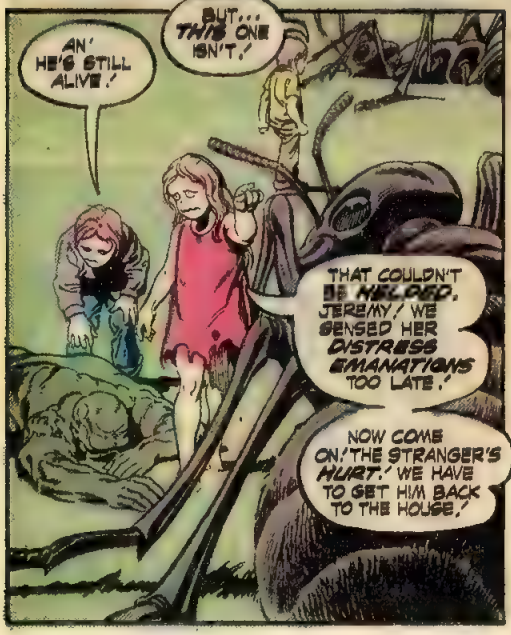
WITH ALL THAT'S BEEN GOING ON... I'D ALMOST FORGOTTEN MY THEORY... ABOUT A CHEMICAL IMBALANCE IN THE SWAMP...
ONE THAT MAY HAVE... HELPED TURN ME... INTO THE SWAMP THING... AND...
HUH...?


FORMICA PALLIDEFULVA! A SOMEWHAT POMPOUS LABEL GIVEN BY SCIENCE TO THAT SPECIES MORE GENERALLY REFERRED TO AS THE COMMON ANT...
ONLY THIS ANT IS FAR FROM COMMON!...
A RATHER OBVIOUS FACT THE INQUISITIVE SWAMP THING WOULD FIND MOST INTERESTING... IF HIS MIND WASN'T OCCUPIED WITH MORE PRESSING MATTERS...
--SUCH AS KEEPING A PAIR OF VISE-STRONG MANDIBLES FROM CRUSHING HIS LICHEN-STREWN RIB CAGE TO PULP...
THIS SWAMP... IS JUST FULL OF SURPRISES... GUNGH!...
BUT IF I'M GOING TO...SURVIVE THIS ONE... I'D BETTER GET OUT OF THESE... KING-SIZE PINCHERS... BEFORE I END UP... IN TWO PIECES...!
CONTINUED ON SAME PAGE FOLLOWING

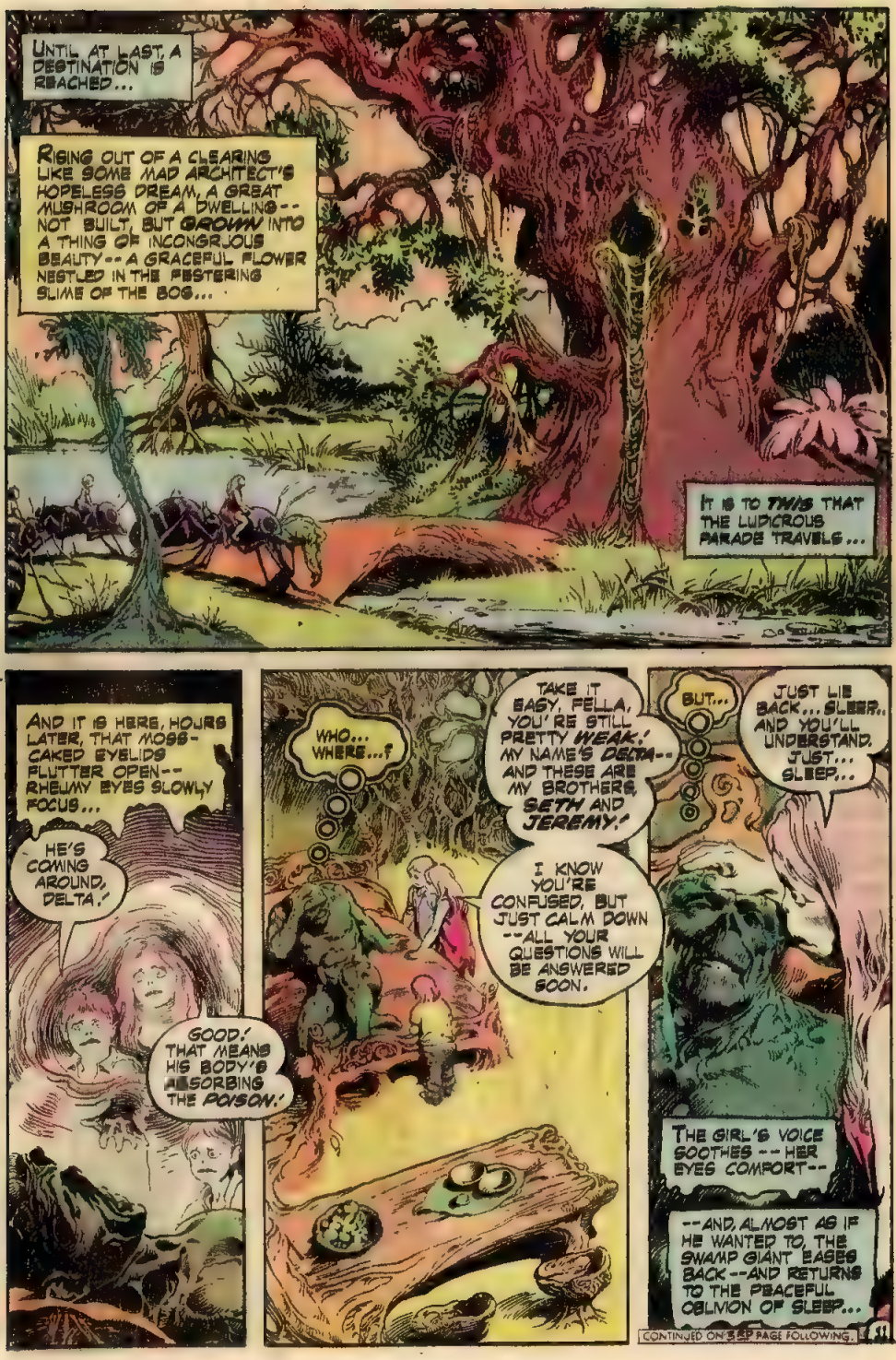
STEEL-STRONG MUSCLES RIPPLE UNDER MOSSY FLESH, AND SLOWLY--SICKENINGLY--THE SCISSORLIKE JAWS OF THE GIANT INSECT PULL FREE--
--TAKING GREAT CLOTS OF SAPPY PULP WITH THEM...
OKAY, ANTSY... YOU'VE HAD YOUR POUND OF FLESH...
NOW IT'S MY TURN...!
AND OVER-SIZED OR NOT...IT'S MY GUESS THERE'S STILL A NECK... UNDER ALL THAT BULK...
AND IF I CAN JUST... GET THE RIGHT KIND OF LEVERAGE... THAT NECK... SHOULD SOON...
CRACCK
OH, SWELL...LOOKS LIKE ANTSY HAD...A FAMILY...
THWUD
THIS PINCHER... IS RAZOR SHARP... AS I WELL KNOW...
IF I CAN JUST...GET IT LOOSE...USE IT AS A WEAPON... MAYBE I CAN...
KRRIK
BUT, UNEXPECTEDLY...
MY SIDES... WHERE THAT THING GRABBED ME...THEY'RE BURNING...!
A-AND MY HEAD... IT'S SPINNING... CAN'T SEE STRAIGHT... B-BUT WHAT...?

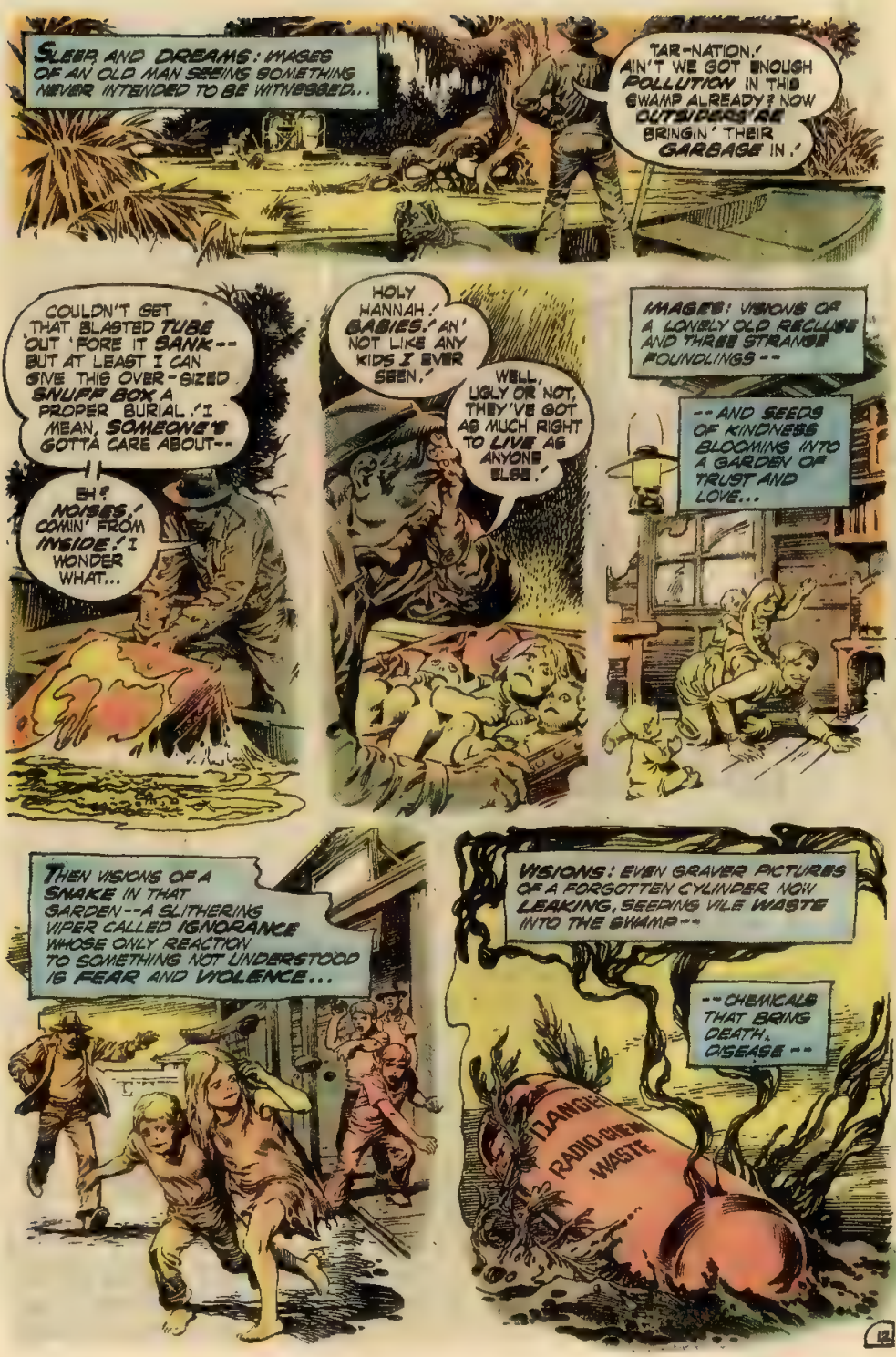

AND THEN THE MIND OF DR. ALEC HOLLAND REMEMBERS...
FORMIC ACID...! ANTS INJECT THEIR VICTIMS... WITH THE STUFF...! I MUST... HAVE A GALLON OF IT... IN MY SYSTEM...!
NO WONDER... I'M WOOZY... CAN'T EVEN... STAND...
THEN, LIKE AN ENTOMOLOGIST'S NIGHTMARE, THE CLICKING HORDE SURROUNDS THE NOW-HELPLESS SWAMP THING...
BUT AS SLAVERING MANDIBLES REACH IN FOR THE KILL...
STOP!

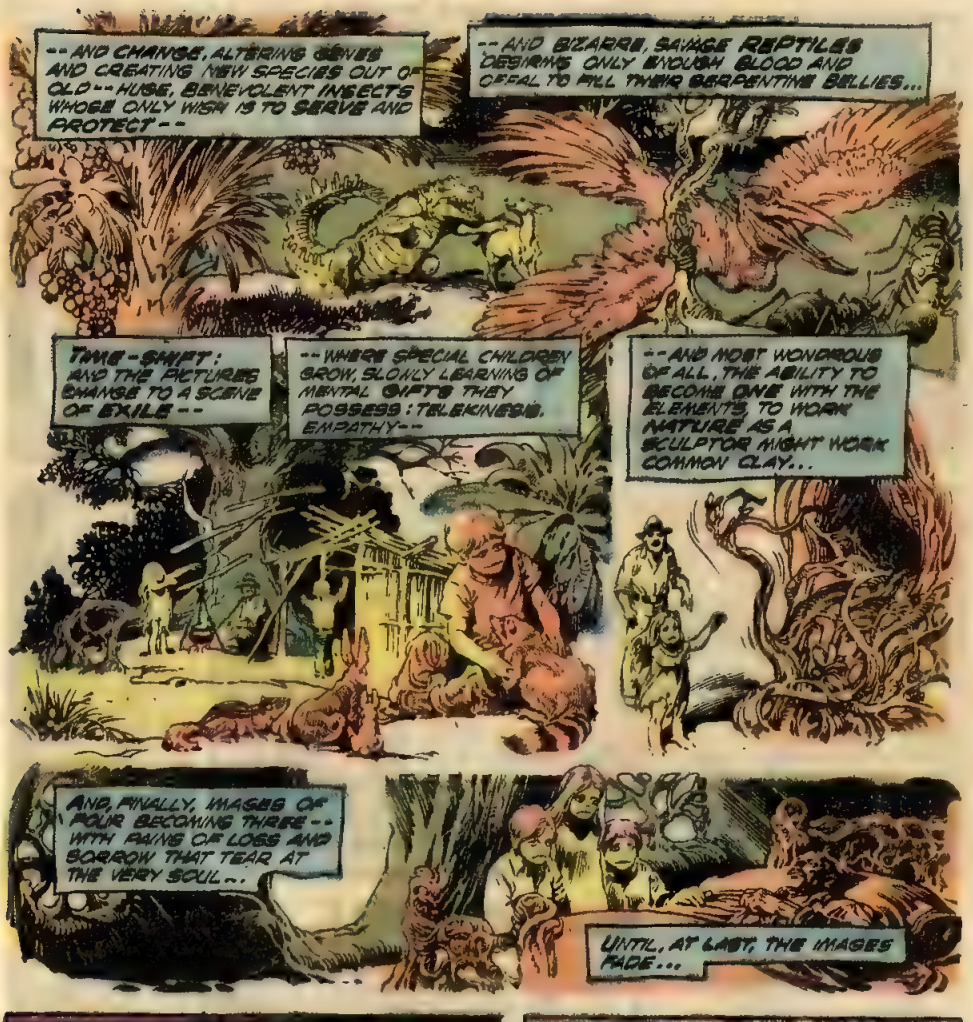
LIKE TRAINED PETS, THE GIANT ANTS HESITATE -- THEN STEP BACK --
--AND A PAIR OF HEAVY, PAIN-CLOUDED EYES SWIVELS UP TO SEE...
THAT... KID...! AND... TWO...OTHERS...! BUT... HOW...
UUNNNHHH...
THAT'S HIM, DELTA! THE ONE THAT SAVED ME!


AN' HE'S STILL ALIVE!
BUT... THIS ONE ISN'T!
THAT COULDN'T BE HELPED, JEREMY! WE SENSED HER DISTRESS EMANATIONS TOO LATE!
NOW COME ON! THE STRANGER'S HURT! WE HAVE TO GET HIM BACK TO THE HOUSE!

SILENCE DRAPES ITSELF OVER THE SWAMP LIKE A CARPET -- GENTLING THE FOOTFALLS OF THE EERIE PROCESSION THAT WENDS ITS WAY ALONG THE FEN PATHS...

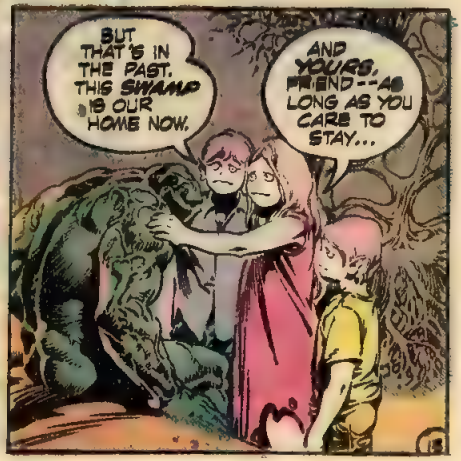

UNTIL AT LAST, A DESTINATION IS REACHED...
RISING OUT OF A CLEARING LIKE SOME MAD ARCHITECT'S HOPELESS DREAM, A GREAT MUSHROOM OF A DWELLING-- NOT BUILT, BUT GROWN INTO A THING OF INCONGRUOUS BEAUTY-- A GRACEFUL FLOWER NESTLED IN THE FESTERING SLIME OF THE BOG...
IT IS TO THIS THAT THE LUDICROUS PARADE TRAVELS...
AND IT IS HERE, HOURS LATER, THAT MOSS-CAKED EYELIDS FLUTTER OPEN-- RHEUMY EYES SLOWLY FOCUS...
HE'S COMING AROUND, DELTA.'
GOOD! THAT MEANS HIS BODY'S ABSORBING THE POISON.'
WHO... WHERE...?
TAKE IT EASY, FELLA, YOU'RE STILL PRETTY WEAK.' MY NAME'S DELTA-- AND THESE ARE MY BROTHERS, SETH AND JEREMY.'
I KNOW YOU'RE CONFUSED, BUT JUST CALM DOWN --ALL YOUR QUESTIONS WILL BE ANSWERED SOON.
BUT...
JUST LIE BACK... SLEEP.. AND YOU'LL UNDERSTAND. JUST... SLEEP...
THE GIRL'S VOICE SOOTHES -- HER EYES COMFORT--
--AND, ALMOST AS IF HE WANTED TO, THE SWAMP GIANT EASES BACK --AND RETURNS TO THE PEACEFUL OBLIVION OF SLEEP...
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE FOLLOWING.

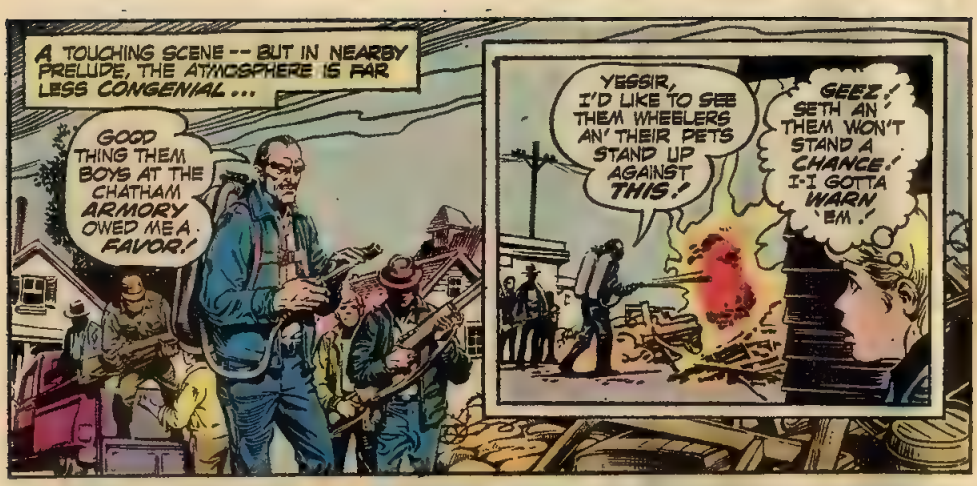

SLEEP AND DREAMS: IMAGES OF AN OLD MAN SEEING SOMETHING NEVER INTENDED TO BE WITNESSED...
TAR-NATION.' AIN'T WE GOT ENOUGH POLLUTION IN THIS SWAMP ALREADY? NOW OUTSIDERS'RE BRINGIN' THEIR GARBAGE IN.'
COULDN'T GET THAT BLASTED TUBE OUT 'FORE IT SANK-- BUT AT LEAST I CAN GIVE THIS OVER-SIZED SNUFF BOX A PROPER BURIAL.' I MEAN, SOMEONE'S GOTTA CARE ABOUT--
EH? NOISES,' COMIN' FROM INSIDE.' I WONDER WHAT...
HOLY HANNAH.' BABIES.' AN' NOT LIKE ANY KIDS I EVER SEEN.'
WELL, UGLY OR NOT, THEY'VE GOT AS MUCH RIGHT TO LIVE AS ANYONE ELSE.'
IMAGES: VISIONS OF A LONELY OLD RECLUSE AND THREE STRANGE FOUNDLINGS--
--AND SEEDS OF KINDNESS BLOOMING INTO A GARDEN OF TRUST AND LOVE...
THEN VISIONS OF A SNAKE IN THAT GARDEN--A SLITHERING VIPER CALLED IGNORANCE WHOSE ONLY REACTION TO SOMETHING NOT UNDERSTOOD IS FEAR AND VIOLENCE...
VISIONS: EVEN GRAVER PICTURES OF A FORGOTTEN CYLINDER NOW LEAKING, SEEPING VILE WASTE INTO THE SWAMP--
--CHEMICALS THAT BRING DEATH, DISEASE--
DANGER RADIO-ACTIVE WASTE

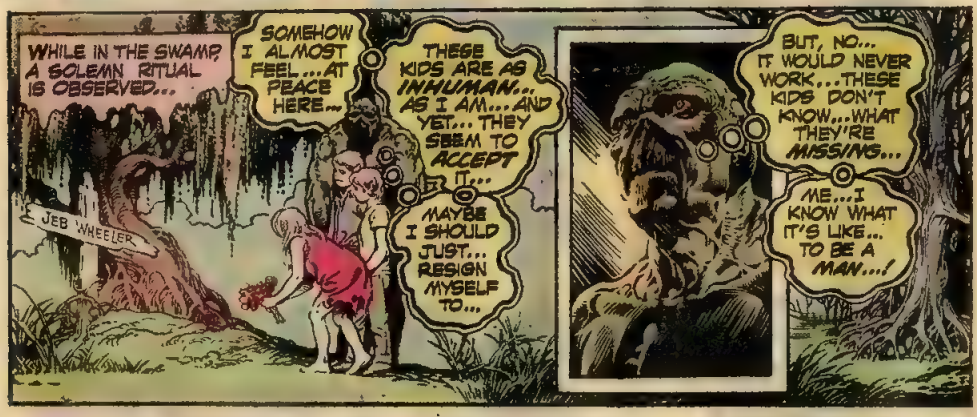

--AND CHANGE, ALTERING GENES AND CREATING NEW SPECIES OUT OF OLD--HUGE, BENEVOLENT INSECTS WHOSE ONLY WISH IS TO SERVE AND PROTECT--
--AND BIZARRE, SAVAGE REPTILES DESIRING ONLY ENOUGH BLOOD AND OFFAL TO FILL THEIR SERPENTINE BELLIES...
TIME-SHIFT: AND THE PICTURES CHANGE TO A SCENE OF EXILE--
--WHERE SPECIAL CHILDREN GROW, SLOWLY LEARNING OF MENTAL GIFTS THEY POSSESS: TELEKINESIS, EMPATHY--
--AND MOST WONDROUS OF ALL, THE ABILITY TO BECOME ONE WITH THE ELEMENTS, TO WORK NATURE AS A SCULPTOR MIGHT WORK COMMON CLAY...

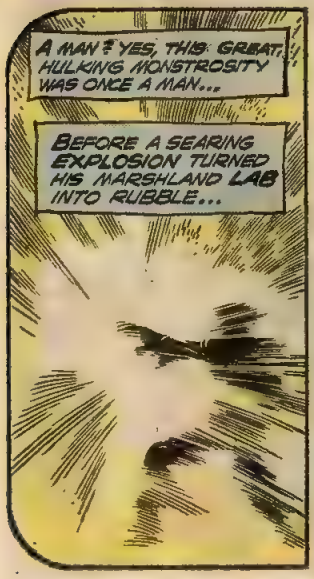
AND, FINALLY, IMAGES OF FOUR BECOMING THREE--WITH PAINS OF LOSS AND SORROW THAT TEAR AT THE VERY SOUL...
UNTIL, AT LAST, THE IMAGES FADE...

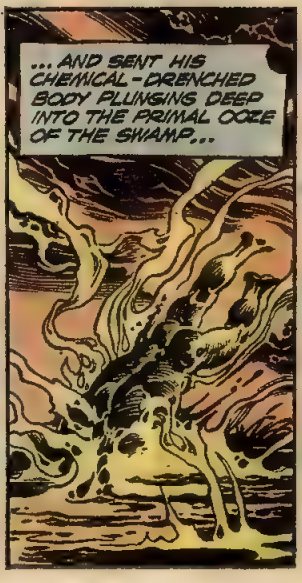
...AND GREAT RED-RIMMED EYES FLICKER OPEN ONCE MORE...
SO NOW YOU KNOW IT ALL, FRIEND.
CEPT THAT WE FIGURE SOMEONE MUST HAVE BEEN EXPERIMENTING IN SPEEDING UP EVOLUTION--AND WE WERE SOME OF HIS FAILURES!


BUT THAT'S IN THE PAST. THIS SWAMP IS OUR HOME NOW.
AND YOURS, FRIEND--AS LONG AS YOU CARE TO STAY...


A TOUCHING SCENE -- BUT IN NEARBY PRELUDE, THE ATMOSPHERE IS FAR LESS CONGENIAL...
GOOD THING THEM BOYS AT THE CHATHAM ARMORY OWED ME A FAVOR!
YESSIR, I'D LIKE TO SEE THEM WHEELERS AN' THEIR PETS STAND UP AGAINST THIS!
GEEZ! SETH AN' THEM WON'T STAND A CHANCE! I-I GOTTA WARN 'EM!


WHILE IN THE SWAMP, A SOLEMN RITUAL IS OBSERVED...
JEB WHEELER
SOMEHOW I ALMOST FEEL...AT PEACE HERE...
THESE KIDS ARE AS INHUMAN... AS I AM... AND YET... THEY SEEM TO ACCEPT IT...
MAYBE I SHOULD JUST... RESIGN MYSELF TO...
BUT, NO... IT WOULD NEVER WORK...THESE KIDS DON'T KNOW...WHAT THEY'RE MISSING...
ME...I KNOW WHAT IT'S LIKE... TO BE A MAN...!

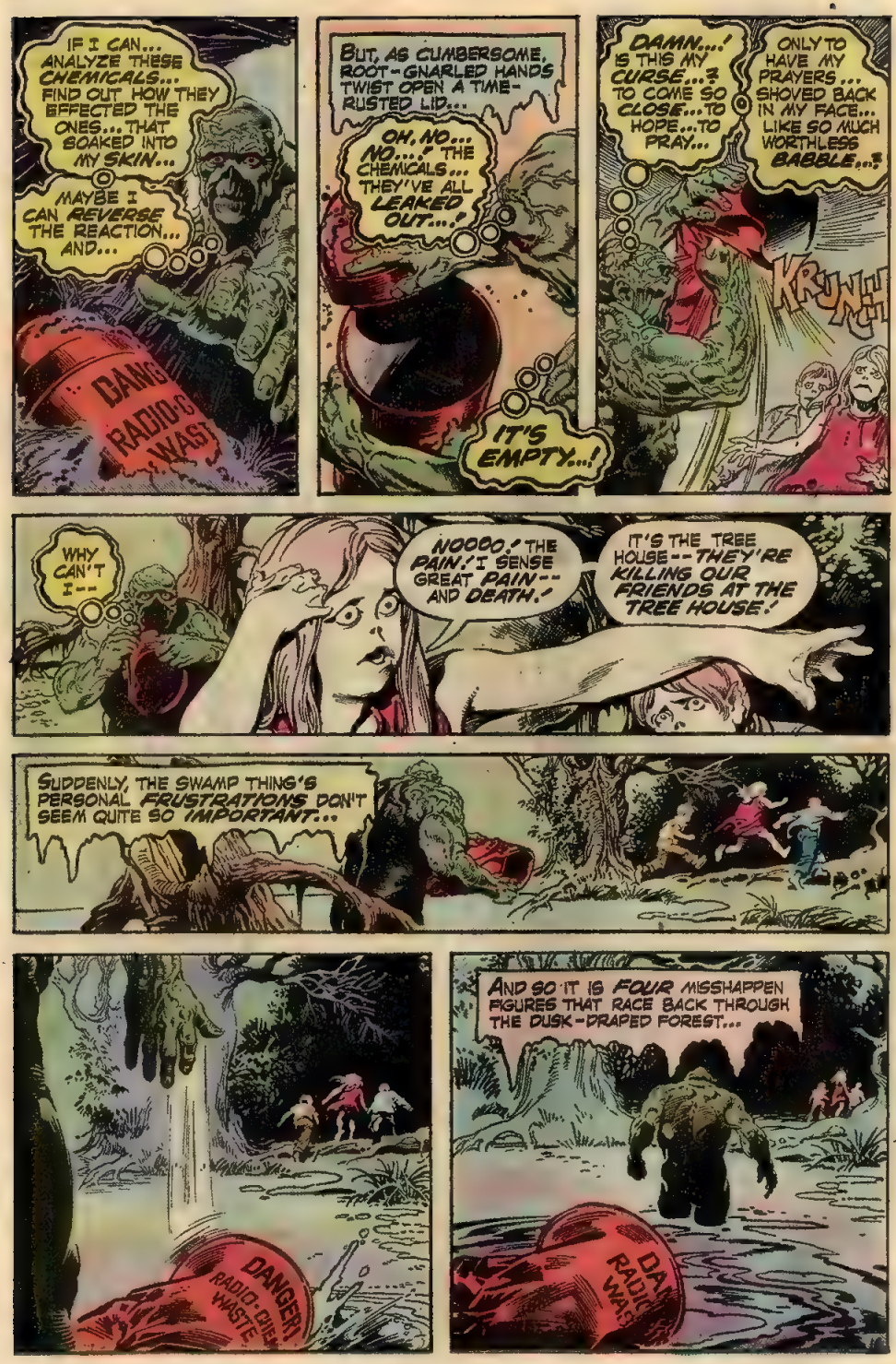




WHERE, FOR REASONS HE WAS ONLY NOW BEGINNING TO UNDERSTAND, HE ROSE AGAIN...
BUT ROSE AS SOMETHING NOT EVEN THE KINDEST WOULD CALL--A MAN...

CONTINUED ON 35TH PAGE FOLLOWING

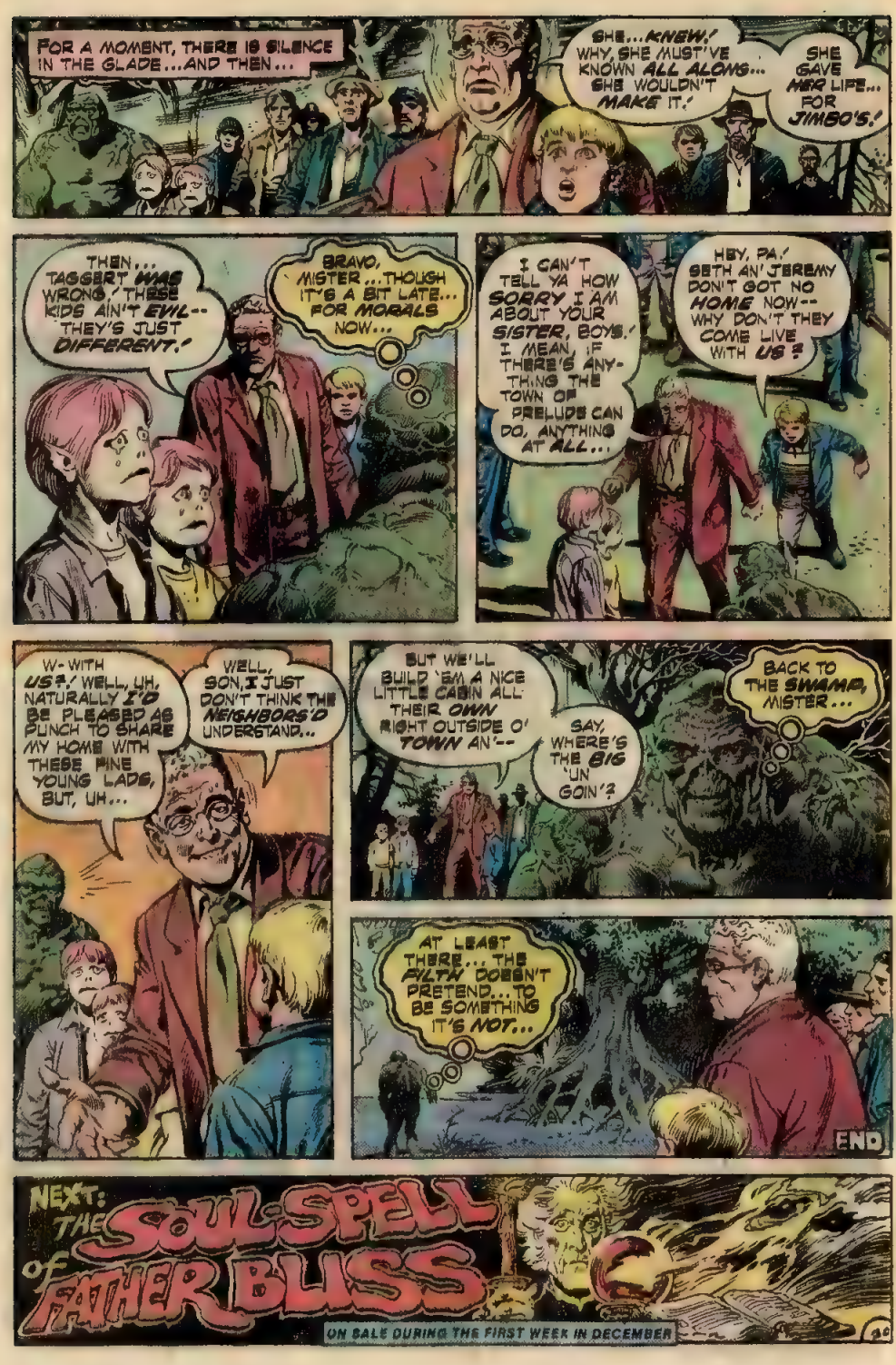
BUT NOW...
IF WHAT I SAW IN MY "DREAM"...IS FOR REAL...IT JUST MAY BE MY TICKET... BACK TO HUMANITY...
ONLY HOW...WILL I EVER FIND...
...THE CYLINDERS?
I CAN SENSE THAT YOU'RE WORRIED ABOUT IT, FRIEND. BUT YOU SHOULDN'T BE.
YOU SEE, WHEN WE REALIZED THE BAD THINGS IT WAS DOING, WE TOOK IT AWAY AND HID IT.
WE CAN EVEN SHOW YOU WHERE, IF IT WOULD MAKE YOU REST EASIER.
REST EASY...! LITTLE LADY... YOU JUST DON'T KNOW...
BUT, SOON AFTER THE SHAMBLING MAN-MONSTER AND HIS PALID FRIENDS LEAVE...
SETH! DELTA! YA'YA GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE! THEY'S COMIN' AFTER YA WITH--
WHA-? THEY'RE NOT HERE,' BUT IF THEY COME BACK WITHOUT ANY WARNIN' THEY'LL BE SITTIN' DUCKS.'
G-GUESS I CAN'T DO NOTHIN' BUT WAIT FOR 'EM--AN' JUST HOPE THEY SHOW UP 'FORE MR. TAGGERT DOES.'
WHILE ACROSS THE MARSH...
IT'S IN THERE, FRIEND--IN THAT HOLLOW TREE.'
I CAN HARDLY BELIEVE IT... AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS... TO BE WITHIN REACH OF SOMETHING...THAT MIGHT END ME OF THIS MUCK-ROTTED FORM... FOREVER...'


IF I CAN... ANALYZE THESE CHEMICALS... FIND OUT HOW THEY EFFECTED THE ONES... THAT SOAKED INTO MY SKIN...
MAYBE I CAN REVERSE THE REACTION... AND...
DANGER RADIO-ACTIVE WASTE
BUT, AS CUMBERSOME, ROOT-GNARLED HANDS TWIST OPEN A TIME-RUSTED LID...
OH, NO... NO...! THE CHEMICALS... THEY'VE ALL LEAKED OUT...!
IT'S EMPTY...!
DAMN...! IS THIS MY CURSE...? TO COME SO CLOSE... TO HOPE... TO PRAY...
ONLY TO HAVE MY PRAYERS... SHOVED BACK IN MY FACE... LIKE SO MUCH WORTHLESS BABBLE...!
KRUNCH
WHY CAN'T I--
NOOOO! THE PAIN! I SENSE GREAT PAIN-- AND DEATH!
IT'S THE TREE HOUSE-- THEY'RE KILLING OUR FRIENDS AT THE TREE HOUSE!
SUDDENLY, THE SWAMP THING'S PERSONAL FRUSTRATIONS DON'T SEEM QUITE SO IMPORTANT...
DANGER! RADIO-ACTIVE WASTE
AND SO IT IS FOUR MISSHAPEN FIGURES THAT RACE BACK THROUGH THE DUSK-DRAPED FOREST...

...STRAIGHT INTO A SCENE OUT OF HELL.!
GOOD LORD...!
LOOK! THE KIDS. THEY WEREN'T IN THE HOUSE AFTER ALL.!
THEN WE'LL JUST COOK 'EM DOWN HERE!
STARTIN' WITH THEIR JOLLY GREEN BODYGUARD.!
WOOOSH
THERE, THAT OUGHTA SETTLE UP FOR-- HUH? H-HE'S STILL ALIVE.!?
THAT'S RIGHT, BUCKO... STILL ALIVE...
...AND KICKIN'S...!
FUMP
SPLAT
AWRIGHT, YOU WALKIN' SUMP-HEAP, I'M GONNA SPLATTER YOU ALL OVER--
WHA-? TH-THE FUEL TANK.! IT'S LEAKIN'.! I-I GOTTA STOP IT BEFORE--

OH... MY... GOD...!
FWA-VOOM
BUT EVEN AS THE SOUND OF THE EXPLOSION FADES, IT IS REPLACED BY A MORE STAYDENT CRY--
--AS A VOICE HELD BACK BY FEAR FINALLY FINDS STRENGTH ENOUGH FOR...
A SCREAM! THERE'S SOMEONE IN THE TREE HOUSE!
OH, MY DEAR LORD! IT'S MY SON-- JIMBO!
H-HELP! PA! P-PLEASE!
I'VE NO LOVE...FOR THESE VILLAGERS...BUT THAT KID DOESN'T DESERVE TO BURN... FOR THE SINS OF HIS FATHER...
BUT AS THE STUMP-LIMBED SWAMP THING REACHES THE BLAZING INFERNO...
IT'S NO GOOD...! THE FIRE'S TOO STRONG...! THE ONLY WAY I'M GETTING THROUGH THAT... IS IN CINDERS...!
NO, MY FRIEND-- THERE IS A WAY!
BUT WE HAVE TO WORK TOGETHER! QUICKLY, TAKE ME ONTO YOUR SHOULDERS! I'LL SEE THAT THE FLAMES DON'T HURT US!
OKAY, LITTLE LADY... ONLY I HOPE YOU KNOW... WHAT YOU'RE DOING...
CONTINUED ON THE PAGE FOLLOWING

THEN, AS THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE BEGINS TO CLIMB, THE SLENDER CHILD EXTENDS HER ARMS, HER MIND REACHING OUT WITH LANCES OF PURE THOUGHT--
--CAUSING THE FLAMES TO PART LIKE WAVES ON SOME ANGRY BLOOD-RED SEA...
UNTIL, AT LAST, THE FIERY SUMMIT IS SAFELY REACHED...
YOU CAN'T CARRY US BOTH... WITH JUST ONE ARM, FRIEND.! G-GO ON AND TAKE JIMBO ON DOWN FIRST-- Y-YOU CAN COME BACK FOR ME.!
I'LL KEEP... THE F-FLAMES BACK.! B-BUT, PLEASE... GO.! H-HURRY.!
GOTTA GET THIS KID DOWN... AND GET BACK TO THE GIRL... FAST...
SHE MAY HAVE... A HEFTY SET OF POWERS... BUT THERE'S A LIMIT... TO EVERYTHING...
AND IF THAT STRAIN ON HER FACE... IS ANY INDICATION... I DON'T KNOW HOW MUCH LONGER... SHE CAN HOLD THOSE...
IT BEGINS WITH A SIGH--A SOFT "SHUFF" OF HARDWOOD-TURNED-ASH GIVING WAY...
THEN GROWS TO A RUMBLE AS FLAME-CHARRED TIMBERS COLLAPSE IN UPON THEMSELVES...
KA-WHOOOM
TAKING A GENTLE AND WILLING LIFE WITH THEM...


FOR A MOMENT, THERE IS SILENCE IN THE GLADE...AND THEN...
SHE...KNEW,! WHY, SHE MUST'VE KNOWN ALL ALONG... SHE WOULDN'T MAKE IT.!
SHE GAVE HER LIFE... FOR JIMBO'S.!
THEN... TAGGERT WAS WRONG,! THESE KIDS AIN'T EVIL-- THEY'S JUST DIFFERENT.!
BRAVO, MISTER...THOUGH IT'S A BIT LATE... FOR MORALS NOW...
I CAN'T TELL YA HOW SORRY I AM ABOUT YOUR SISTER, BOYS.! I MEAN, IF THERE'S ANY-THING THE TOWN OF PRELUDE CAN DO, ANYTHING AT ALL...
HEY, PA.! SETH AN' JEREMY DON'T GOT NO HOME NOW-- WHY DON'T THEY COME LIVE WITH US ?
W-WITH US ?.! WELL, UH, NATURALLY I'D BE PLEASED AS PUNCH TO SHARE MY HOME WITH THESE FINE YOUNG LADS, BUT, UH...
WELL, SON, I JUST DON'T THINK THE NEIGHBORS'D UNDERSTAND...
BUT WE'LL BUILD 'EM A NICE LITTLE CABIN ALL THEIR OWN RIGHT OUTSIDE O' TOWN AN'--
SAY, WHERE'S THE BIG 'UN GOIN'?
BACK TO THE SWAMP, MISTER...
AT LEAST THERE... THE FILTH DOESN'T PRETEND... TO BE SOMETHING IT'S NOT...
END
NEXT: THE SOUL-SPELL OF FATHER BLISS
ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN DECEMBER
30

THE LINE OF
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SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
SWAMP THING
THE VERY BEST
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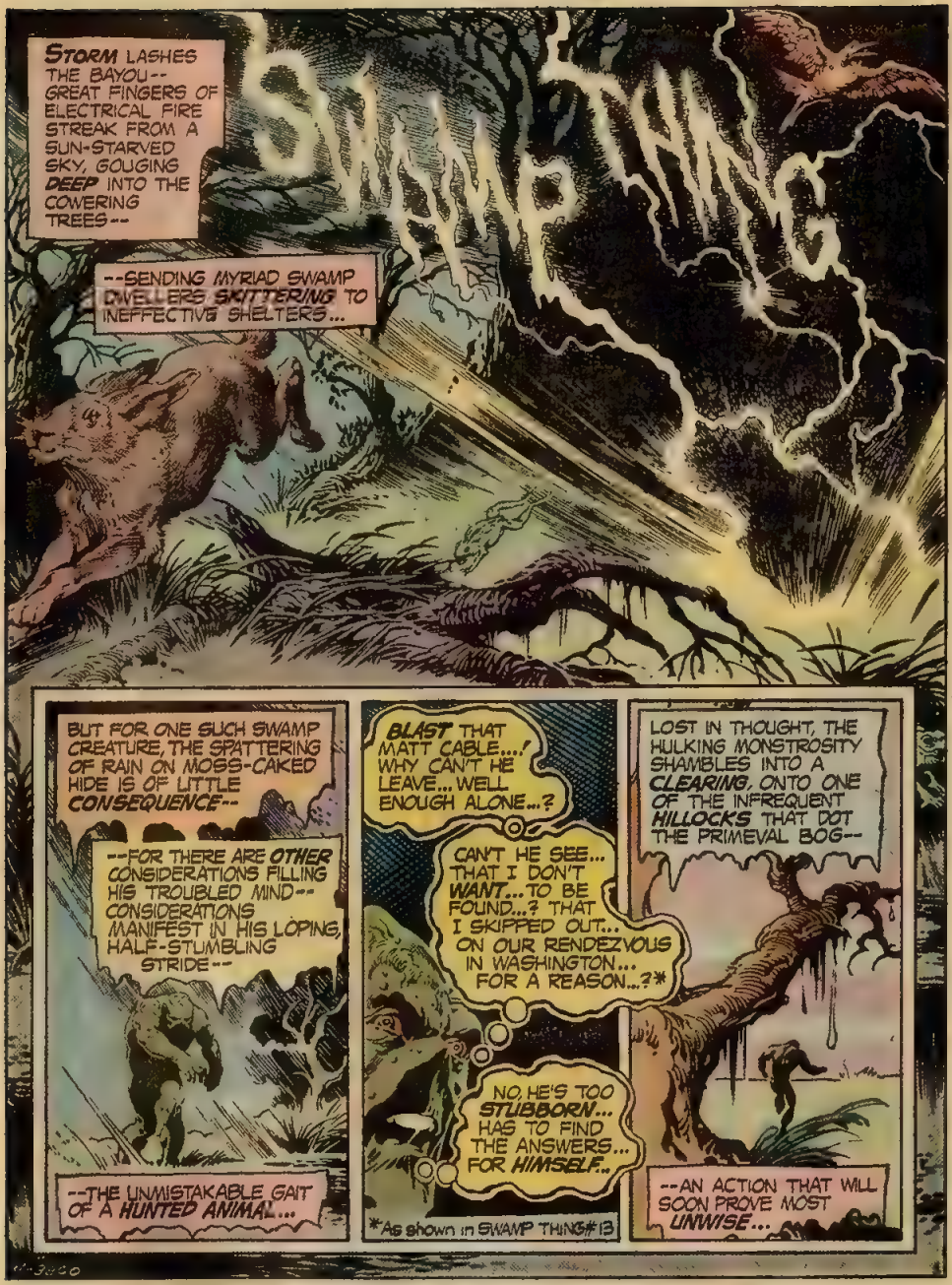
SWAMP THING
STORM LASHES THE BAYOU-- GREAT FINGERS OF ELECTRICAL FIRE STREAK FROM A SUN-STARVED SKY, GOUGING DEEP INTO THE COWERING TREES--
--SENDING MYRIAD SWAMP DWELLERS SKITTERING TO INEFFECTIVE SHELTERS...
BUT FOR ONE SUCH SWAMP CREATURE, THE SPATTERING OF RAIN ON MOSS-CAKED HIDE IS OF LITTLE CONSEQUENCE--
--FOR THERE ARE OTHER CONSIDERATIONS FILLING HIS TROUBLED MIND-- CONSIDERATIONS MANIFEST IN HIS LOPING, HALF-STUMBLING STRIDE--
--THE UNMISTAKABLE GAIT OF A HUNTED ANIMAL...
BLAST THAT MATT CABLE...! WHY CAN'T HE LEAVE... WELL ENOUGH ALONE...?
CAN'T HE SEE... THAT I DON'T WANT... TO BE FOUND...? THAT I SKIPPED OUT... ON OUR RENDEZVOUS IN WASHINGTON... FOR A REASON...?*
NO, HE'S TOO STUBBORN... HAS TO FIND THE ANSWERS... FOR HIMSELF...
*As shown in SWAMP THING #13
LOST IN THOUGHT, THE HULKING MONSTROSITY SHAMBLES INTO A CLEARING, ONTO ONE OF THE INFREQUENT HILLOCKS THAT DOT THE PRIMEVAL BOG--
--AN ACTION THAT WILL SOON PROVE MOST UNWISE...

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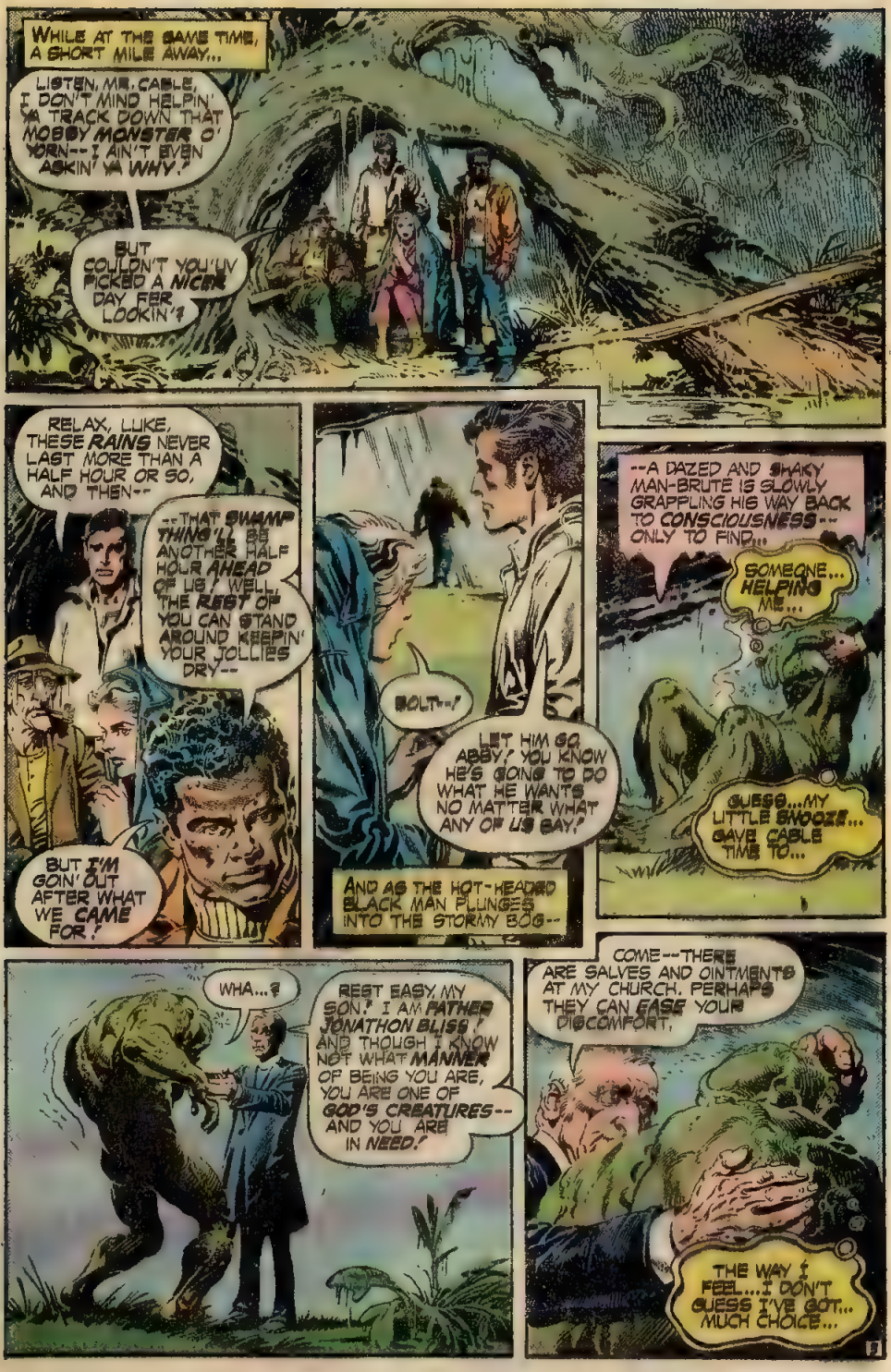
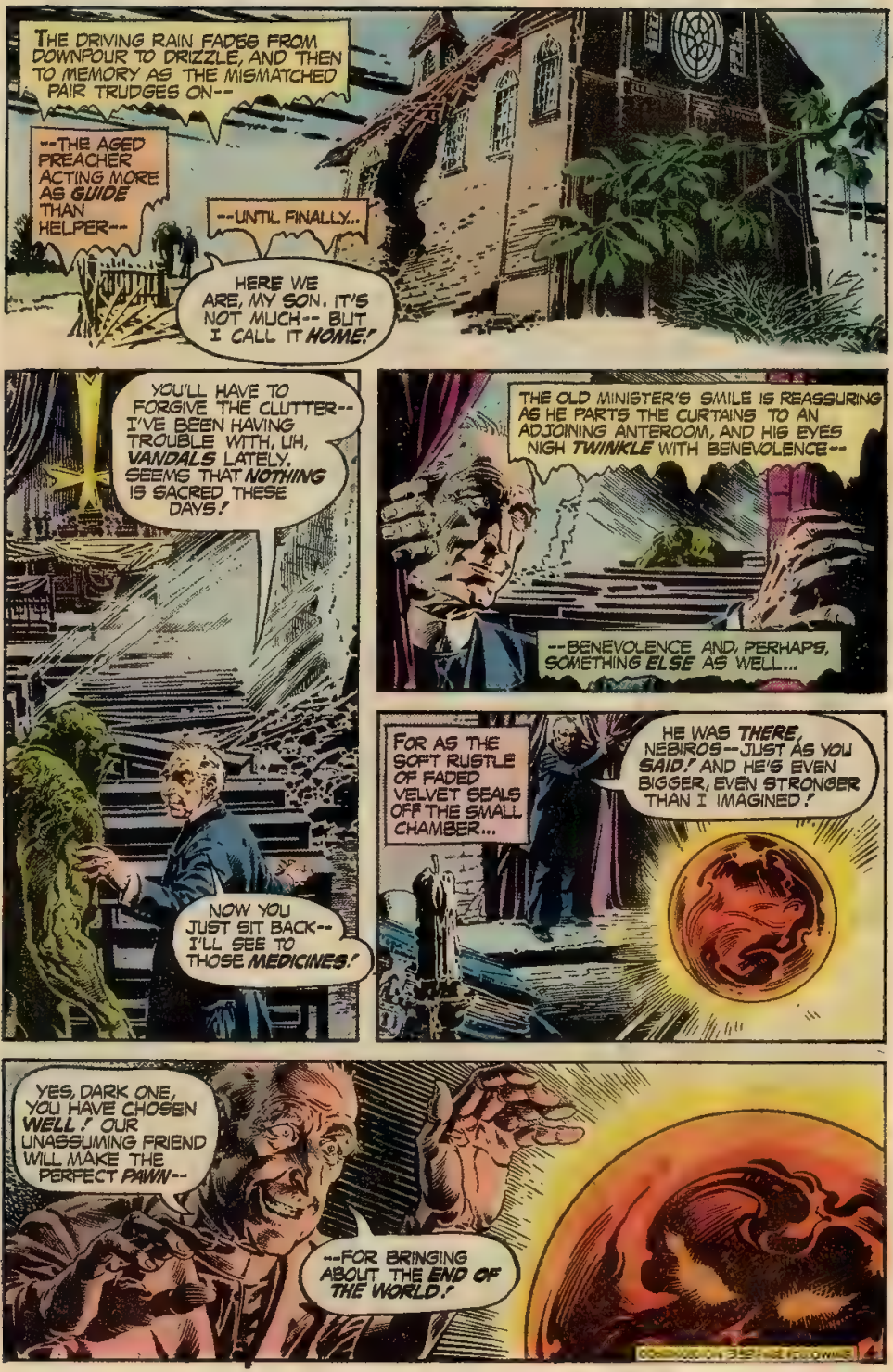
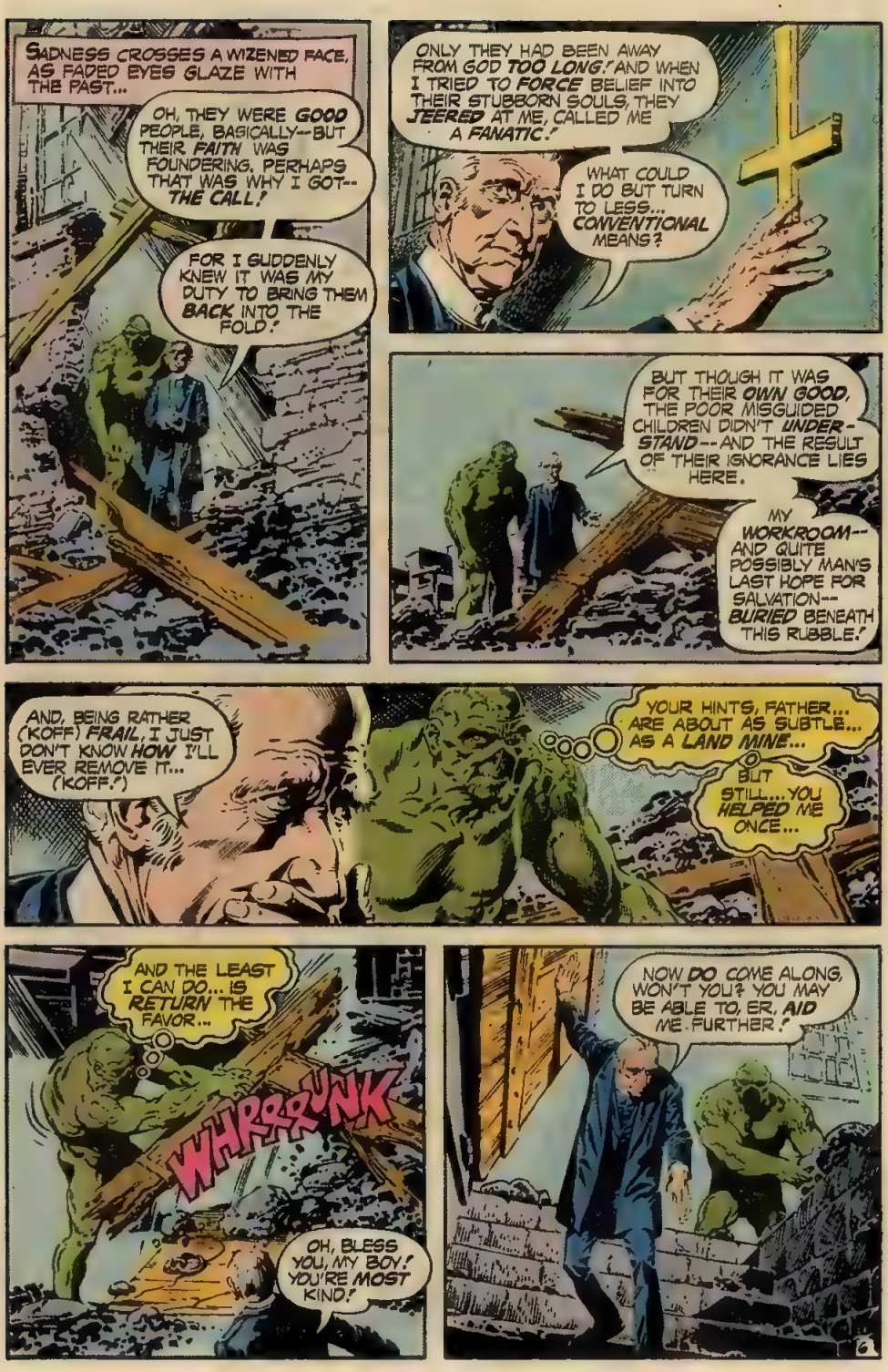
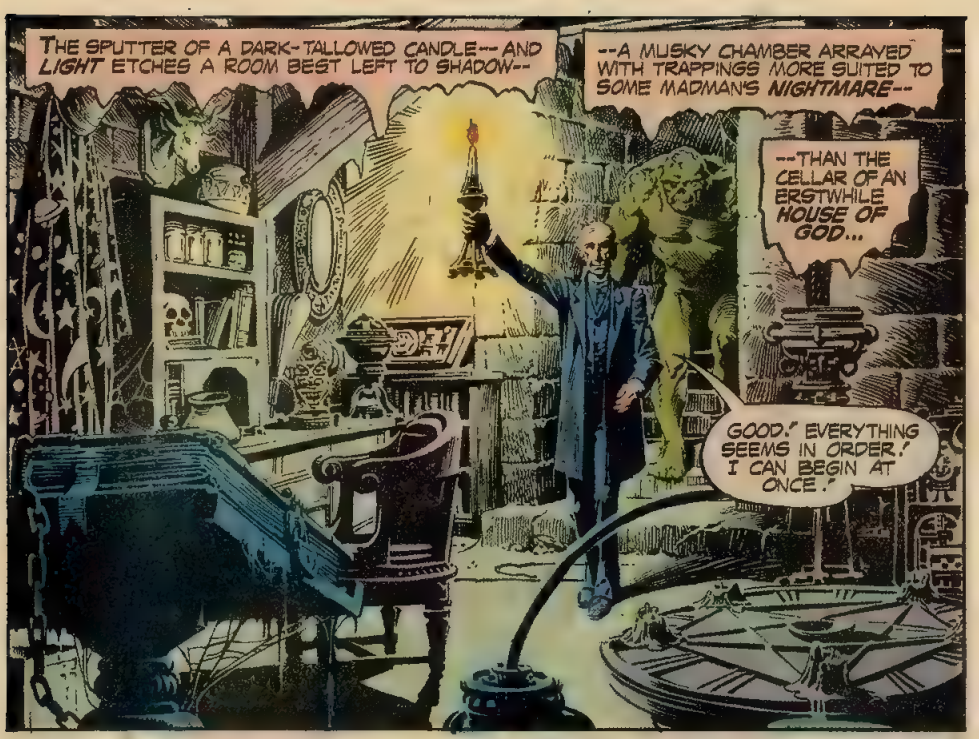
FACT: LIGHTNING IS THE RAPID, SEARING DISCHARGE OF ELECTRONS BETWEEN EARTH AND SKY. FACT: SAID LIGHTNING INVARIABLY CHOOSES THE HIGHEST POINT IN A GIVEN AREA AS ITS TARGET...
ZZTT
FACT: THE SEVEN FOOT PLUS BULK OF THE UNWARY SWAMP THING HAS JUST UNWITTINGLY BECOME THE HIGHEST POINT IN THIS PARTICULAR AREA...
KZZ
CONCLUSION: INEVITABLE...
THE SOUL-SPELL OF FATHER BLISS
A DAVID MICHELINIE (WRITER) - NESTOR REDONDO (ILLUSTRATOR) - JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION


WHILE AT THE SAME TIME, A SHORT MILE AWAY...
LISTEN, ME, CABLE, I DON'T MIND HELPIN' YA TRACK DOWN THAT MOBBY MONSTER O' YORN--I AIN'T EVEN ASKIN' YA WHY.
BUT COULDN'T YOU'UV PICKED A NICER DAY FER LOOKIN'?
RELAX, LUKE, THESE RAINS NEVER LAST MORE THAN A HALF HOUR OR SO, AND THEN--
--THAT SWAMP THING'LL BE ANOTHER HALF HOUR AHEAD OF US! WELL, THE REST OF YOU CAN STAND AROUND KEEPIN' YOUR JOLLIES DRY--
BUT I'M GOIN' OUT AFTER WHAT WE CAME FOR!
BOLT--!
LET HIM GO, ABBY! YOU KNOW HE'S GOING TO DO WHAT HE WANTS NO MATTER WHAT ANY OF US SAY!
AND AS THE HOT-HEADED BLACK MAN PLUNGES INTO THE STORMY BOG--
--A DAZED AND SHAKY MAN-BRUTE IS SLOWLY GRAPPLING HIS WAY BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS--ONLY TO FIND...
SOMEONE... HELPING ME...
GUESS...MY LITTLE SNOOZE... GAVE CABLE TIME TO...
WHA...?
REST EASY, MY SON! I AM FATHER JONATHON BLISS! AND THOUGH I KNOW NOT WHAT MANNER OF BEING YOU ARE, YOU ARE ONE OF GOD'S CREATURES--AND YOU ARE IN NEED!
COME--THERE ARE SALVES AND OINTMENTS AT MY CHURCH. PERHAPS THEY CAN EASE YOUR DISCOMFORT.
THE WAY I FEEL...I DON'T GUESS I'VE GOT... MUCH CHOICE...

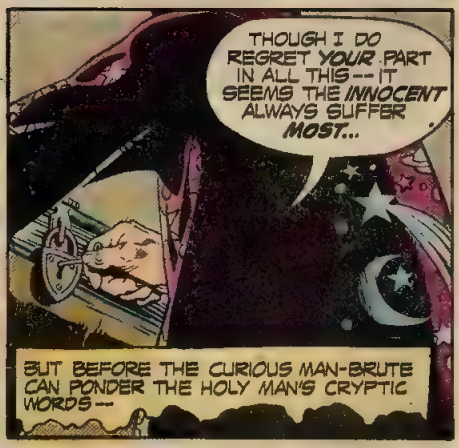

THE DRIVING RAIN FADES FROM DOWNPOUR TO DRIZZLE, AND THEN TO MEMORY AS THE MISMATCHED PAIR TRUDGES ON--
--THE AGED PREACHER ACTING MORE AS GUIDE THAN HELPER--
--UNTIL FINALLY..
HERE WE ARE, MY SON. IT'S NOT MUCH-- BUT I CALL IT HOME!
YOU'LL HAVE TO FORGIVE THE CLUTTER-- I'VE BEEN HAVING TROUBLE WITH, UH, VANDALS LATELY. SEEMS THAT NOTHING IS SACRED THESE DAYS!
NOW YOU JUST SIT BACK-- I'LL SEE TO THOSE MEDICINES!
THE OLD MINISTER'S SMILE IS REASSURING AS HE PARTS THE CURTAINS TO AN ADJOINING ANTEROOM, AND HIS EYES NIGH TWINKLE WITH BENEVOLENCE--
--BENEVOLENCE AND, PERHAPS, SOMETHING ELSE AS WELL...
FOR AS THE SOFT RUSTLE OF FADED VELVET SEALS OFF THE SMALL CHAMBER...
HE WAS THERE, NEBIROS--JUST AS YOU SAID! AND HE'S EVEN BIGGER, EVEN STRONGER THAN I IMAGINED!
YES, DARK ONE, YOU HAVE CHOSEN WELL! OUR UNASSUMING FRIEND WILL MAKE THE PERFECT PAWN--
--FOR BRINGING ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD!

HEAT FAIRLY SEETHES FROM THE DAMP, OPPRESSING AIR--PICKING AT THE REMNANTS OF A TEMPER ALREADY FRAYED WITH FRUSTRATION...
NOTHING, DAMMIT! NOT SO MUCH AS A SLIMY FOOTPRINT!
GUESS I BETTER CHECK BACK WITH THE OTHERS--MAYBE THEY'VE COME UP WITH SOMETHING MORE THAN MOSQUITO BITES!
BEARCH-2 TO CABLE! COME IN CA--HUH?! WHAT THE--
ENGANGH!
WHILE AT THE CRUMBLING CHURCH OF FATHER BLISS...
THERE, MY BOY, HOW'S THAT?
DON'T KNOW... WHAT'S IN YOUR HOME REMEDIES, PREACHER... BUT I DO FEEL... SOME BETTER...
SO I GUESS I'D BEST... BE ON MY--
WHAT?! WH-WHY, YOU'RE NOT LEAVING, ARE YOU? B-BUT YOU CAN'T! I- I MEAN, UH, WHAT IF THAT MOB OF, ER, VANDALS SHOULD COME BACK? WH-WHAT WOULD HAPPEN THEN?
YOU SEE WHAT THEY DID TO MY CHURCH-- AND I ASSURE YOU, THEY WOULD TREAT ME NO BETTER! EVEN THOUGH THEY WERE ONCE--
--MY OWN CONGREGATION!
5

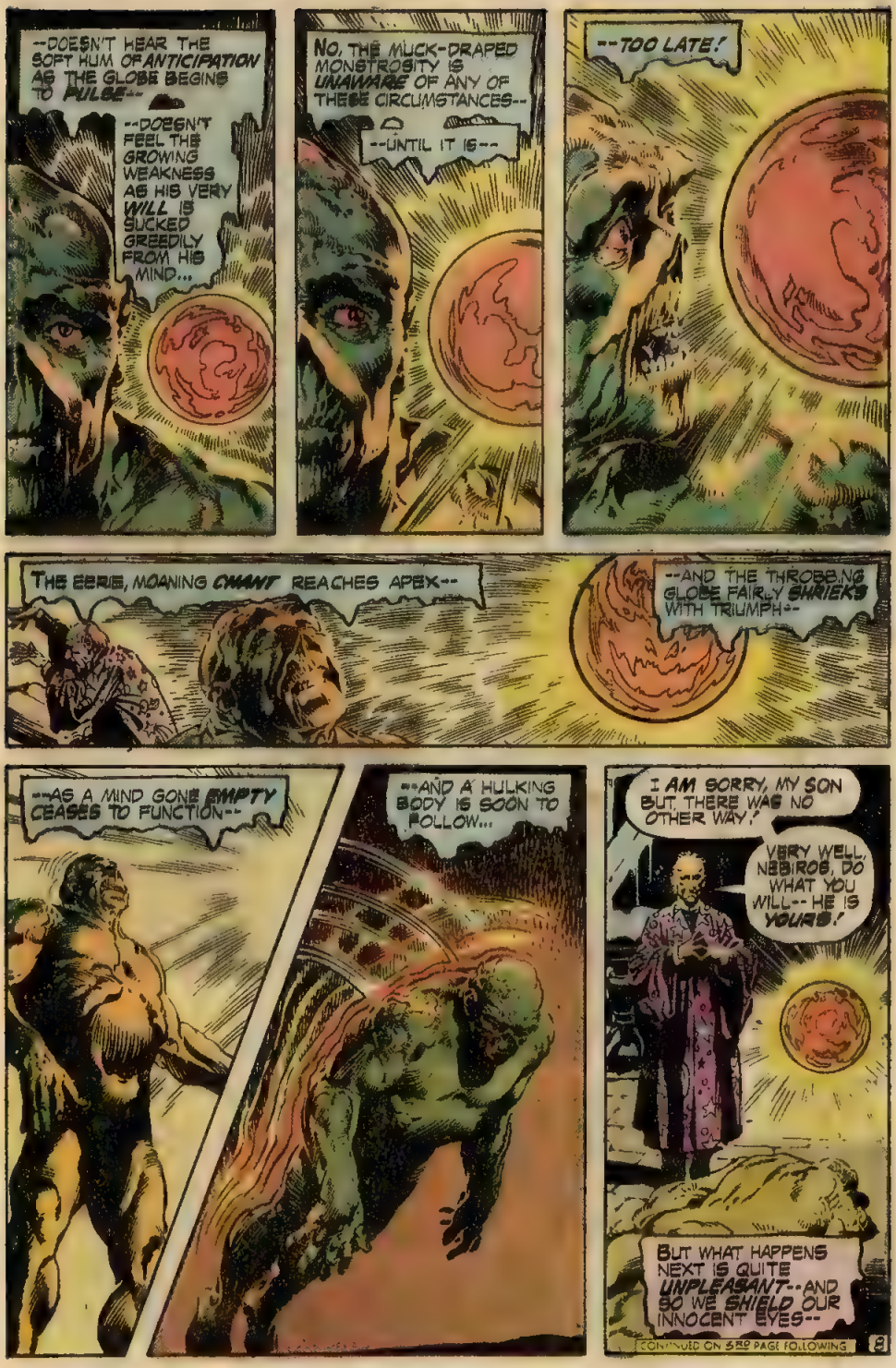

SADNESS CROSSES A WIZENED FACE, AS FADED EYES GLAZE WITH THE PAST...
OH, THEY WERE GOOD PEOPLE, BASICALLY--BUT THEIR FAITH WAS FOUNDERING. PERHAPS THAT WAS WHY I GOT-- THE CALL!
FOR I SUDDENLY KNEW IT WAS MY DUTY TO BRING THEM BACK INTO THE FOLD!
ONLY THEY HAD BEEN AWAY FROM GOD TOO LONG! AND WHEN I TRIED TO FORCE BELIEF INTO THEIR STUBBORN SOULS, THEY JEERED AT ME, CALLED ME A FANATIC!
WHAT COULD I DO BUT TURN TO LESS... CONVENTIONAL MEANS?
BUT THOUGH IT WAS FOR THEIR OWN GOOD, THE POOR MISGUIDED CHILDREN DIDN'T UNDER-STAND--AND THE RESULT OF THEIR IGNORANCE LIES HERE.
MY WORKROOM--AND QUITE POSSIBLY MAN'S LAST HOPE FOR SALVATION--BURIED BENEATH THIS RUBBLE!
AND, BEING RATHER (KOFF) FRAIL, I JUST DON'T KNOW HOW I'LL EVER REMOVE IT... (KOFF!)
YOUR HINTS, FATHER... ARE ABOUT AS SUBTLE... AS A LAND MINE...
BUT STILL... YOU HELPED ME ONCE...
AND THE LEAST I CAN DO... IS RETURN THE FAVOR...
WHRRRUNK
OH, BLESS YOU, MY BOY! YOU'RE MOST KIND!
NOW DO COME ALONG, WON'T YOU? YOU MAY BE ABLE TO, ER, AID ME FURTHER!
6


THE SPUTTER OF A DARK-TALLOWED CANDLE--- AND LIGHT ETCHES A ROOM BEST LEFT TO SHADOW--
--A MUSKY CHAMBER ARRAYED WITH TRAPPINGS MORE SUITED TO SOME MADMAN'S NIGHTMARE--
---THAN THE CELLAR OF AN ERSTWHILE HOUSE OF GOD...
GOOD.' EVERYTHING SEEMS IN ORDER.' I CAN BEGIN AT ONCE.'

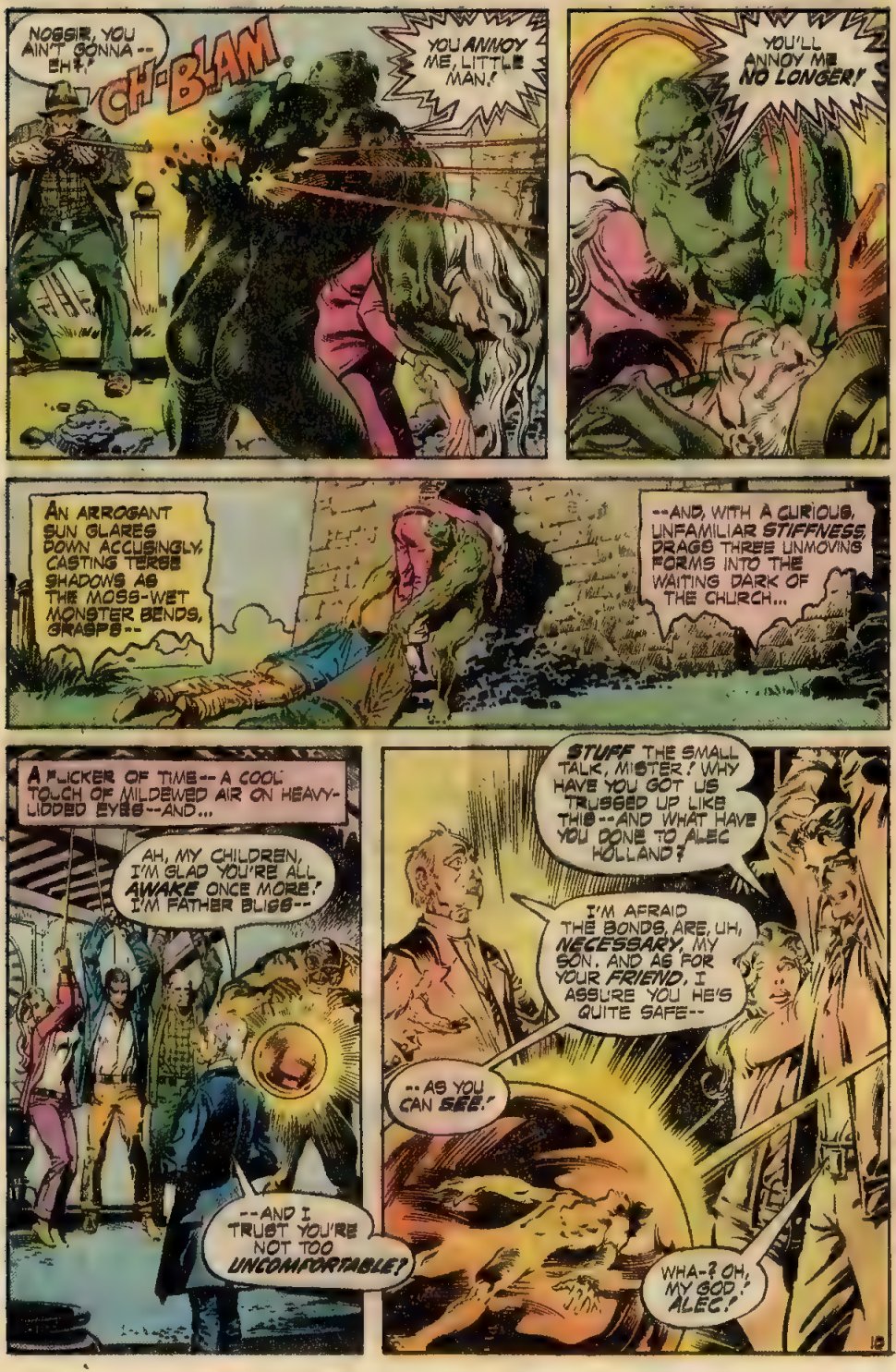
AH, BUT YOU WONDER WHY A PRIEST WOULD DABBLE IN BLACK MAGIC.'
WELL, MY SON, I BELIEVE THAT EVEN THE PIOUS MUST BEND WHERE THE ENDS JUSTIFY THE MEANS.'

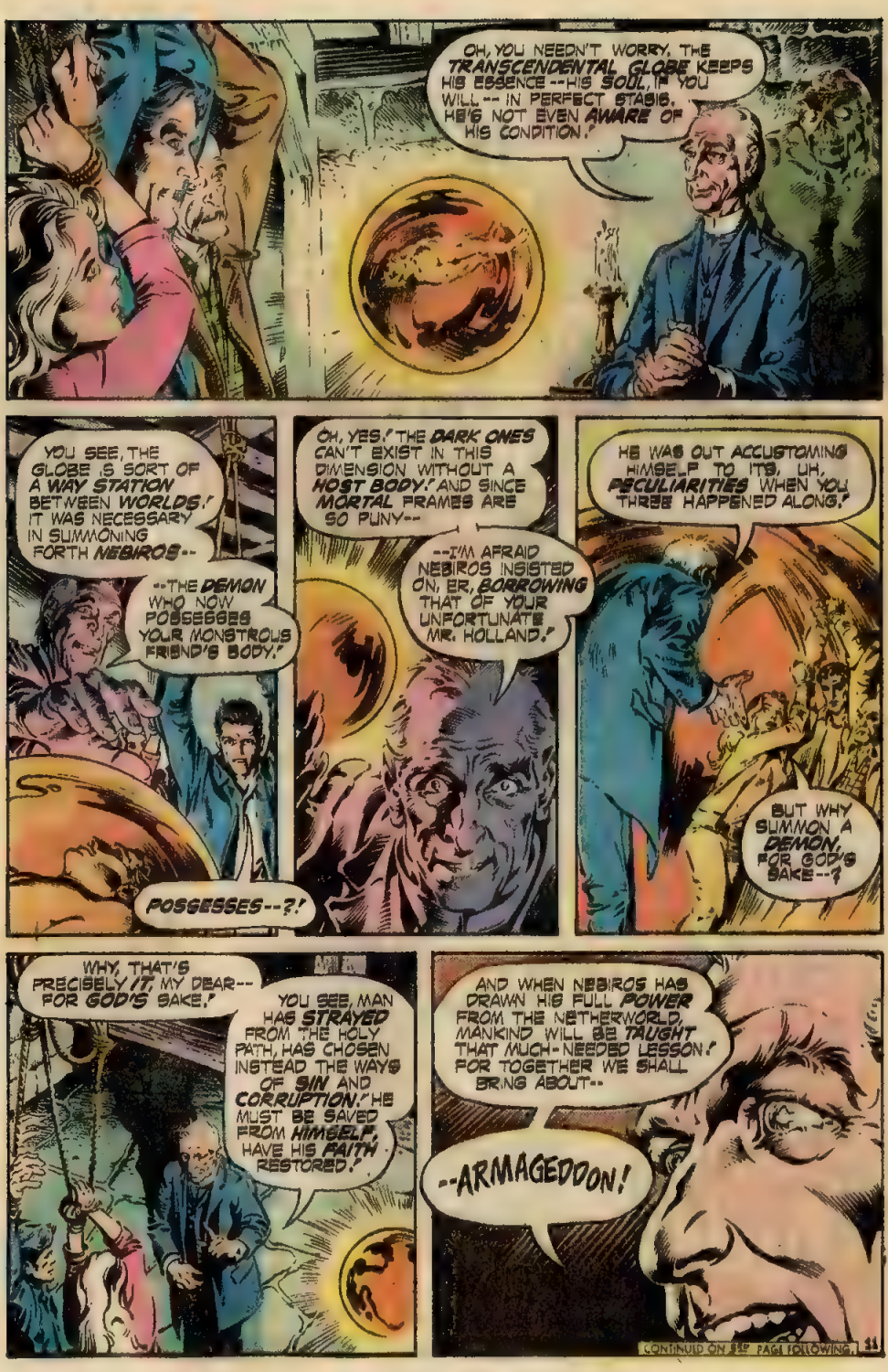

THOUGH I DO REGRET YOUR PART IN ALL THIS--IT SEEMS THE INNOCENT ALWAYS SUFFER MOST...
BUT BEFORE THE CURIOUS MAN-BRUTE CAN PONDER THE HOLY MAN'S CRYPTIC WORDS--

--AN ANCIENT BOOK IS OPENED, AND AN INCANTATION BEGUN--A DRONING, HYPNOTIC CHANT THAT DULLS THE SWAMP THING'S SENSES--
--SO THAT HE DOESN'T NOTICE THE ODDLY-GLOWING ORB THAT WAFTS DOWN THE STAIRWAY BEHIND HIM--


--DOESN'T HEAR THE SOFT HUM OF ANTICIPATION AS THE GLOBE BEGINS TO PULSE--
--DOESN'T FEEL THE GROWING WEAKNESS AS HIS VERY WILL IS SUCKED GREEDILY FROM HIS MIND...
NO, THE MUCK-DRAPED MONSTROSITY IS UNAWARE OF ANY OF THESE CIRCUMSTANCES--
--UNTIL IT IS--
--TOO LATE!
THE EERIE, MOANING CHANT REACHES APEX--
--AND THE THROBBING GLOBE FAIRLY SHRIEKS WITH TRIUMPH--
--AS A MIND GONE EMPTY CEASES TO FUNCTION--
--AND A HULKING BODY IS SOON TO FOLLOW...
I AM SORRY, MY SON BUT THERE WAS NO OTHER WAY!
VERY WELL, NABIROS, DO WHAT YOU WILL--HE IS YOURS!
BUT WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS QUITE UNPLEASANT--AND SO WE SHIELD OUR INNOCENT EYES--
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING
8

--TO OPEN THEM A SHORT WHILE LATER ON THREE MOST WEARY TRAVELERS...
WHEW! I'D SAY I WAS 'BOUT READY FOR A BREATHER!
I THINK WE COULD ALL USE A REST, MATT!
OKAY, THERE'S A CLEARING OF SOME SORT UP AHEAD--WE CAN--
BUT AS THE UNSUSPECTING TRIO STEPS INTO THE STEAMING GLADE...
HEY, AN OLD CHURCH! AND...
ALEC?! FOR THE LOVE OF SANITY, MAN, WE'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER THIS STINKING SWAMP FOR YOU!
WHY THE DEVIL HAVE YOU BEEN RUNNING FROM US? DON'T YOU REALIZE WE JUST WANT TO--
MATT, WAIT! THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG! HIS EYES--
BUT MATT CABLE HAS LITTLE TIME TO PONDER THE STRANGE HOLLOWNESS IN THE SWAMP BEAST'S EYES...
IN FACT, HE HAS LITTLE TIME FOR ANYTHING--SAVE PAIN...
SWAK
WHY, YOU-- YOU'RE NOT ALEC HOLLAND!
WELL, I DON'T CARE WHAT YA ARE, FELLA-- YA AIN'T GETTIN' THEM UGLY HANDS ON ME!

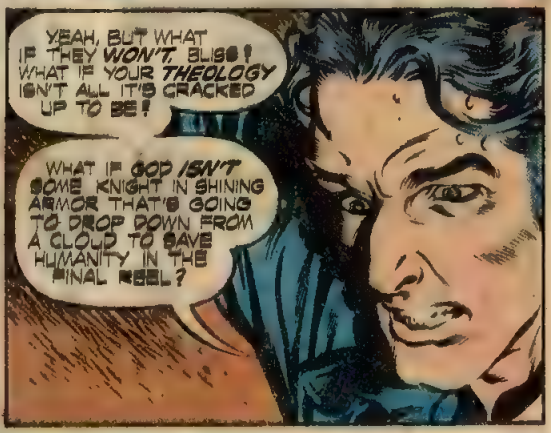

NOSSIR, YOU AIN'T GONNA -- EH?!
CH-BLAM
YOU ANNOY ME, LITTLE MAN!
YOU'LL ANNOY ME NO LONGER!
AN ARROGANT SUN GLARES DOWN ACCUSINGLY, CASTING TERSE SHADOWS AS THE MOSS-WET MONSTER BENDS, GRASPS--
--AND, WITH A CURIOUS, UNFAMILIAR STIFFNESS, DRAGS THREE UNMOVING FORMS INTO THE WAITING DARK OF THE CHURCH...
A FLICKER OF TIME-- A COOL TOUCH OF MILDEWED AIR ON HEAVY-LIDDED EYES--AND...
AH, MY CHILDREN, I'M GLAD YOU'RE ALL AWAKE ONCE MORE! I'M FATHER BLIGG--
--AND I TRUST YOU'RE NOT TOO UNCOMFORTABLE?
STUFF THE SMALL TALK, MISTER! WHY HAVE YOU GOT US TRUSSED UP LIKE THIS--AND WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO ALEC HOLLAND?
I'M AFRAID THE BONDS, ARE, UH, NECESSARY, MY SON. AND AS FOR YOUR FRIEND, I ASSURE YOU HE'S QUITE SAFE--
--AS YOU CAN SEE!
WHA-? OH, MY GOD! ALEC!
18


OH, YOU NEEDN'T WORRY, THE TRANSCENDENTAL GLOBE KEEPS HIS ESSENCE--HIS SOUL, IF YOU WILL -- IN PERFECT STASIS. HE'S NOT EVEN AWARE OF HIS CONDITION!
YOU SEE, THE GLOBE IS SORT OF A WAY STATION BETWEEN WORLDS! IT WAS NECESSARY IN SUMMONING FORTH NEBIROS--
--THE DEMON WHO NOW POSSESSES YOUR MONSTROUS FRIEND'S BODY!
POSSESSES--?!
OH, YES! THE DARK ONES CAN'T EXIST IN THIS DIMENSION WITHOUT A HOST BODY! AND SINCE MORTAL FRAMES ARE SO PUNY--
--I'M AFRAID NEBIROS INSISTED ON, ER, BORROWING THAT OF YOUR UNFORTUNATE MR. HOLLAND!
HE WAS OUT ACCUSTOMING HIMSELF TO ITS, UH, PECULIARITIES WHEN YOU THREE HAPPENED ALONG!
BUT WHY SUMMON A DEMON, FOR GOD'S SAKE--?
WHY, THAT'S PRECISELY IT, MY DEAR-- FOR GOD'S SAKE!
YOU SEE, MAN HAS STRAYED FROM THE HOLY PATH, HAS CHOSEN INSTEAD THE WAYS OF SIN AND CORRUPTION! HE MUST BE SAVED FROM HIMSELF, HAVE HIS FAITH RESTORED!
AND WHEN NEBIROS HAS DRAWN HIS FULL POWER FROM THE NETHERWORLD, MANKIND WILL BE TAUGHT THAT MUCH-NEEDED LESSON! FOR TOGETHER WE SHALL BRING ABOUT--
--ARMAGEDDON!
CONTINUED ON SEE PAGE FOLLOWING
11

YES--ARMAGEDDON! THE FINAL BATTLE! THE ULTIMATE CHAOS! FOR WITH THE ULTIMATE IN CHAOS LOOSE IN THE WORLD, THE ULTIMATE IN ORDER MUST SURELY REVEAL ITSELF TO BALANCE THE COSMIC SCALES!
AND THE ULTIMATE IN ORDER CAN ONLY BE-- GOD!
DON'T YOU SEE? IT'S SO SIMPLE! WITH GOD MANIFEST ONCE MORE, PEOPLE WILL HAVE TO BELIEVE!
YOU'RE MAD, BLISS! AFTER THAT KIND OF HOLOCAUST, NO ONE WILL BE LEFT ALIVE TO BELIEVE!
OH, BUT NEBIROS ASSURED ME--
I ASSURED YOU NOTHING, FOOL--SAVE THE CONTINUANCE OF YOUR OWN TRIFLING EXISTENCE!
FOR NOW I AM AT FULL STRENGTH--AND I THIRST FOR THE FEAST OF RUIN THAT HAS BEEN PROMISED ME!
BUT PERHAPS I SHOULD FIRST STUDY THESE MORTALS! IT IS GOOD TO KNOW ONE'S ENEMY-- AND THERE IS STILL MUCH I HAVE TO LEARN ABOUT--
UNH?!
--THE HUMAN SOUL!
GEEEEEAAA

AGONY BLEEDS FROM THE ANGUISHED CRIES THAT ECHO THROUGH THE SHADOWED CHAMBER--
--AS THE HELL-DRIVEN SWAMP THING PEELS AWAY THE LAYERS OF A MAN'S LIFE --LIKE THE SOFT SKIN OF SOME OVER-RIPE FRUIT...
AAAAAAA

IS THIS WHAT YOU WANTED, BLISS? IS THIS YOUR IDEA OF SALVATION?
I... I DIDN'T REALIZE--
BUT, NO! WHAT PRICE ARE A FEW SOULS, IF THEY WILL BRING HIM BACK TO THE PEOPLE!

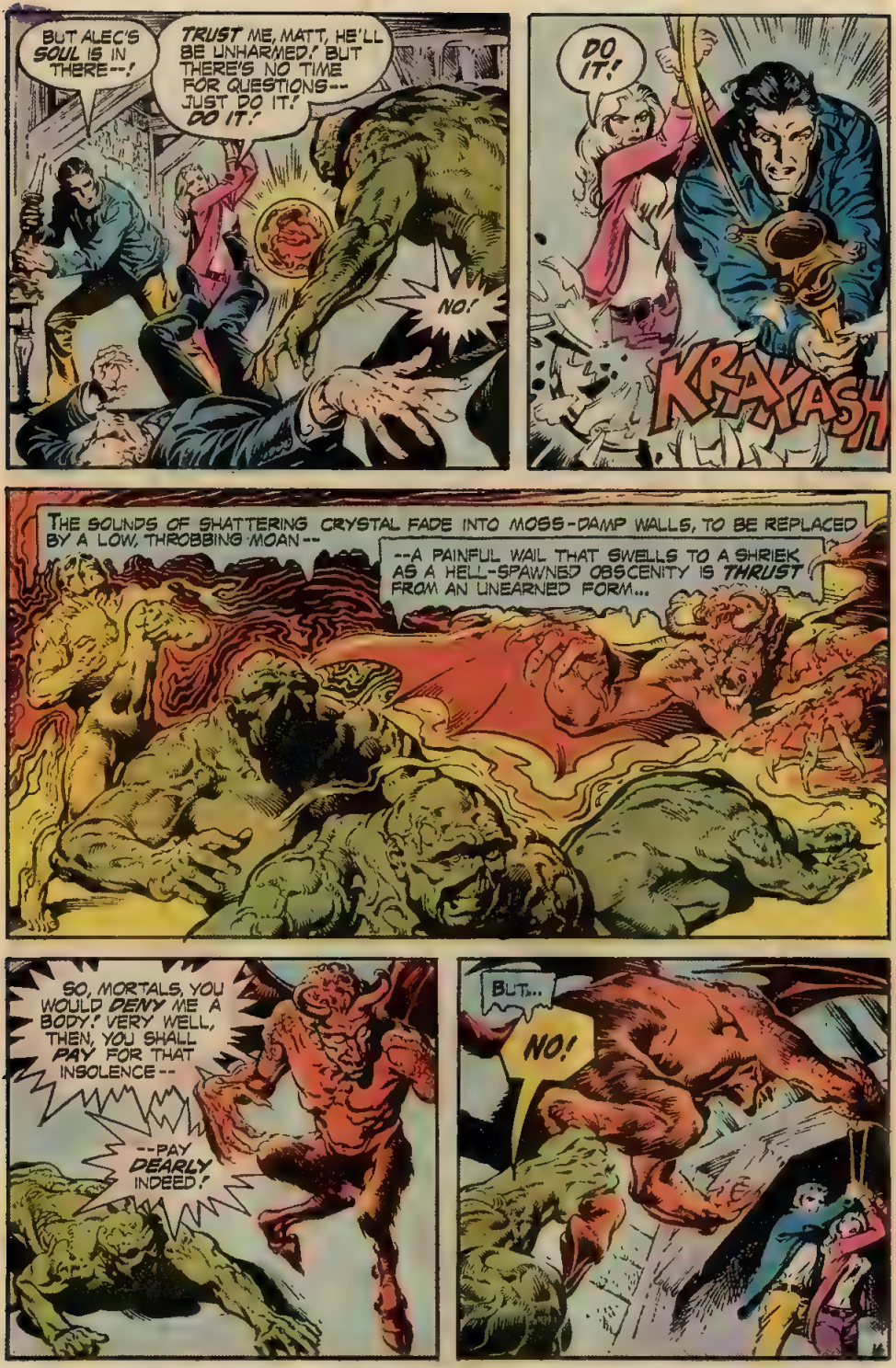

YEAH, BUT WHAT IF THEY WON'T, BLISS! WHAT IF YOUR THEOLOGY ISN'T ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE!
WHAT IF GOD ISN'T SOME KNIGHT IN SHINING ARMOR THAT'S GOING TO DROP DOWN FROM A CLOUD TO SAVE HUMANITY IN THE FINAL REEL?

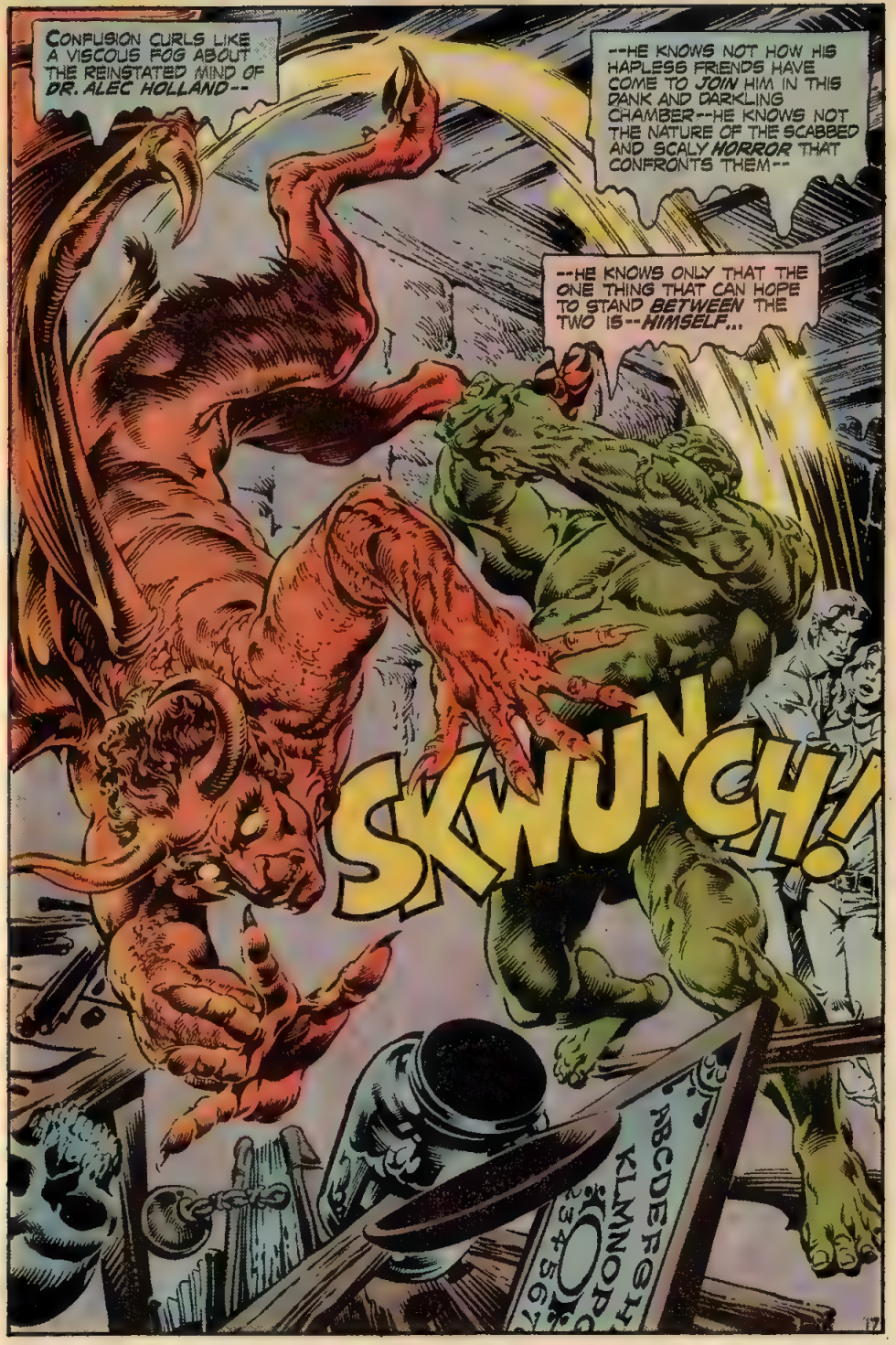
INFIDEL! YOU SPEAK BLASPHEMY--
I SPEAK REASON! LOOK AT MAN'S HISTORY! HOW CAN YOU CALL ALL THAT MURDER, WAR AND CRUELTY GOD'S WORK? CAN'T YOU SEE THAT MORALITY HAS BEEN LEFT TO MAN? THAT GOD WANTS MAN TO CHOOSE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL FOR HIMSELF?

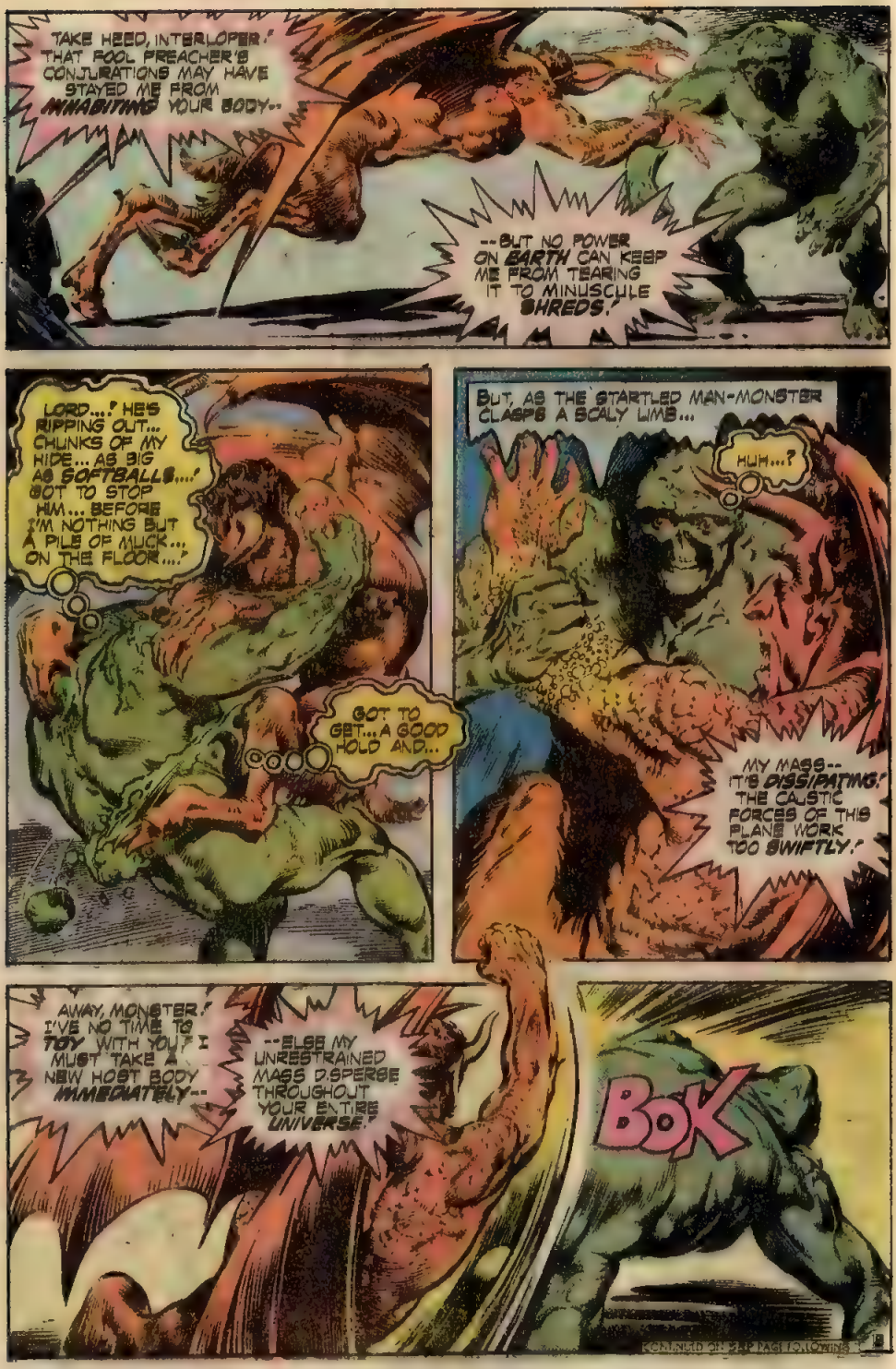
I-I WON'T LISTEN--
BUT YOU HAVE TO LISTEN, BLISS-- BECAUSE YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE MAN'S CHOICE FOR HIM! CAN'T YOU SEE, YOU OVER-ZEALOUS MANIAC--
--YOU'RE PUTTING YOURSELF ABOVE GOD!

NO! NO! YOU'RE WRONG--!
MAYBE I AM, BLISS! BUT WITH THE SURVIVAL OF MANKIND AT STAKE, CAN YOU AFFORD TO TAKE THE CHANCE THAT I'M NOT?
ARE YOU WILLING TO TAKE THE DAMNATION OF AN ENTIRE WORLD ON YOUR OWN SOUL, FATHER BLISS?
I... I...
BUT A SUDDEN DEATH-LIKE STILLNESS CHOKES OFF THE STAMMERED REPLY AS...
IT IS DONE-- AND I AM DISAPPOINTED. I HAD HOPED THE GAME WOULD PROVIDE MORE SPORT. BUT IF ALL MORTALS ARE MADE OF SUCH SORRY STUFF AS THIS...
AH, BUT PERHAPS A YOUNGER SPECIMEN MIGHT OFFER MORE AMUSEMENT...
MATT--!
BUT, BEFORE THE MUCK-STREWN DEMON CAN PLUCK ITS SECOND PRIZE...
NEBIROS TOPHET ELOHIM!
AAGH! S-SOMETHING... PULLING AT ME! TRYING TO TEAR ME...FROM THIS BODY! WHAT--?

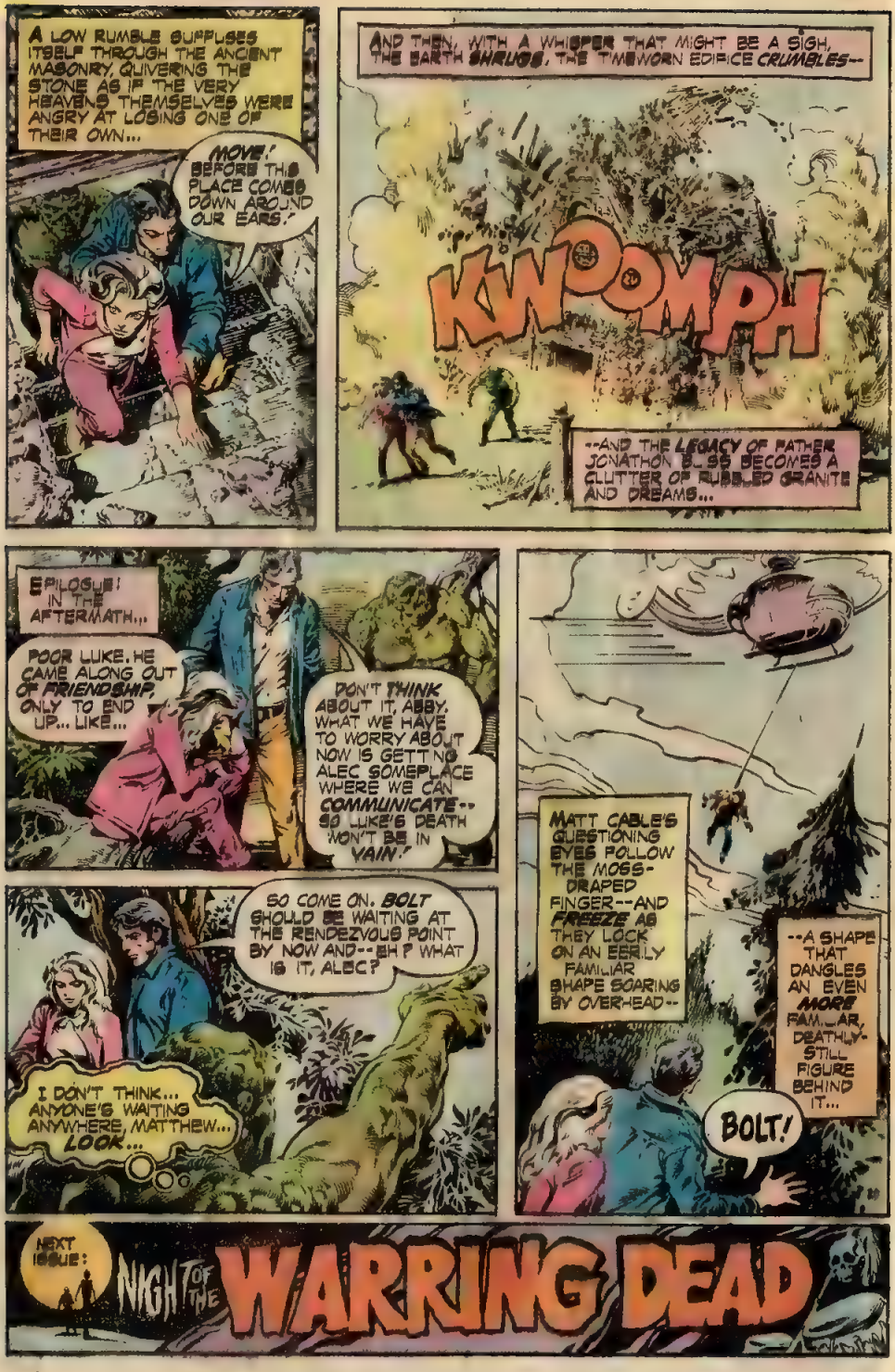
YOU?! YOU DARE DEFY ME! WHITTLE AT ME WITH YOUR PETTY SPELLS OF EXORCISM?
I-I HAD NO RIGHT TO BRING YOU HERE IN THE FIRST PLACE, DEMON! BUT PERHAPS THERE IS STILL TIME-- TO SEND YOU BACK!
HURRIEDLY, A VOICE CRACKED AND SHAKY WITH SELF-DOUBT COMPLETES THE PURIFYING INCANTATION--
--AND THE CELLAR ROOM FAIRLY SHUDDERS WITH THE CLASH OF POWERS WHOSE AGE CAN ONLY BE GUESSED AT IN WHISPERS...
BUT IN THE END...
YOUR SPELL...WAS TOO WEAK, PREACHER! YOU'VE UNDERESTIMATED... MY POWER!
A MISTAKE... YOU'LL NOT LIVE... TO RECTIFY!
BUT FATE WORKS IN MYSTERIOUS WAYS: WITNESS THE EYES OF ONE ABIGAIL ARCANE AS THEY SPRING WIDE, AS IF FOCUSING ON SOMETHING FAR BEYOND NORMAL KEN. SOMETHING AWESOME--
--AND, PERHAPS, JUST A BIT FRIGHTENING...
MATTHEW-- THE GLOBE!
HUH?
YOU'VE GOT TO SMASH THE GLOBE! IT'S THE DEMON'S POWER SOURCE! WITHOUT IT, HE CAN'T RESIST THE SPELL!


BUT ALEC'S SOUL IS IN THERE--!
TRUST ME, MATT, HE'LL BE UNHARMED! BUT THERE'S NO TIME FOR QUESTIONS-- JUST DO IT! DO IT!
NO!
DO IT!
KRAYASH
THE SOUNDS OF SHATTERING CRYSTAL FADE INTO MOSS-DAMP WALLS, TO BE REPLACED BY A LOW, THROBBING MOAN--
--A PAINFUL WAIL THAT SWELLS TO A SHRIEK AS A HELL-SPAWNED OBSCENITY IS THRUST FROM AN UNEARNED FORM...
SO, MORTALS, YOU WOULD DENY ME A BODY! VERY WELL, THEN, YOU SHALL PAY FOR THAT INSOLENCE--
--PAY DEARLY INDEED!
BUT...
NO!

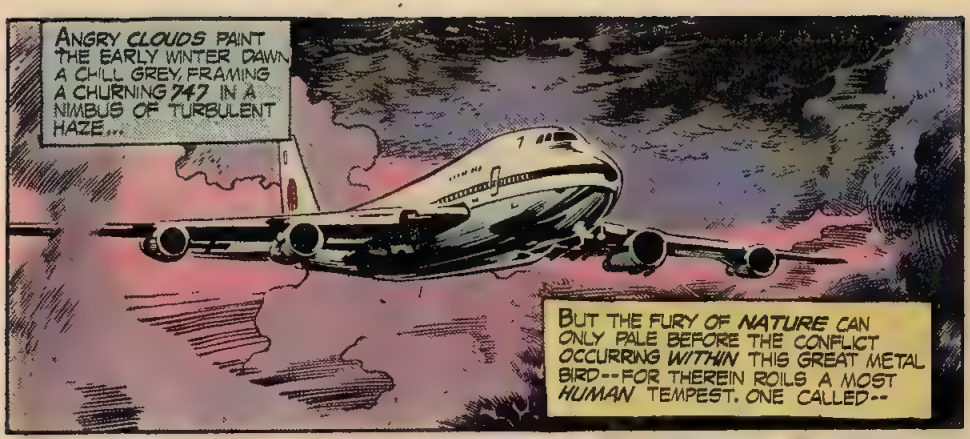

CONFUSION CURLS LIKE A VISCOUS FOG ABOUT THE REINSTATED MIND OF DR. ALEC HOLLAND--
--HE KNOWS NOT HOW HIS HAPLESS FRIENDS HAVE COME TO JOIN HIM IN THIS DANK AND DARKLING CHAMBER--HE KNOWS NOT THE NATURE OF THE SCABBED AND SCALY HORROR THAT CONFRONTS THEM--
--HE KNOWS ONLY THAT THE ONE THING THAT CAN HOPE TO STAND BETWEEN THE TWO IS--HIMSELF...
SKWUNCH!
ABCDEFGH
KLMNOP
1234567

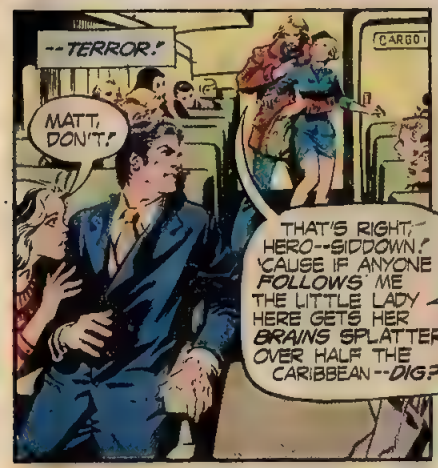

TAKE HEED, INTERLOPER! THAT FOOL PREACHER'S CONJURATIONS MAY HAVE STAYED ME FROM INHABITING YOUR BODY--
--BUT NO POWER ON EARTH CAN KEEP ME FROM TEARING IT TO MINUSCULE SHREDS!
LORD...! HE'S RIPPING OUT... CHUNKS OF MY HIDE... AS BIG AS SOFTBALLS...! GOT TO STOP HIM... BEFORE I'M NOTHING BUT A PILE OF MUCK... ON THE FLOOR...!
GOT TO GET... A GOOD HOLD AND...
BUT, AS THE STARTLED MAN-MONSTER CLASPS A SCALY LIMB...
HUH...?
MY MASS-- IT'S DISSIPATING! THE CAUSTIC FORCES OF THIS PLANE WORK TOO SWIFTLY!
AWAY, MONSTER! I'VE NO TIME TO TOY WITH YOU! I MUST TAKE A NEW HOST BODY IMMEDIATELY--
--ELSE MY UNRESTRAINED MASS DISPERSE THROUGHOUT YOUR ENTIRE UNIVERSE!
BOK
CONTINUED ON PAGE FOLLOWING

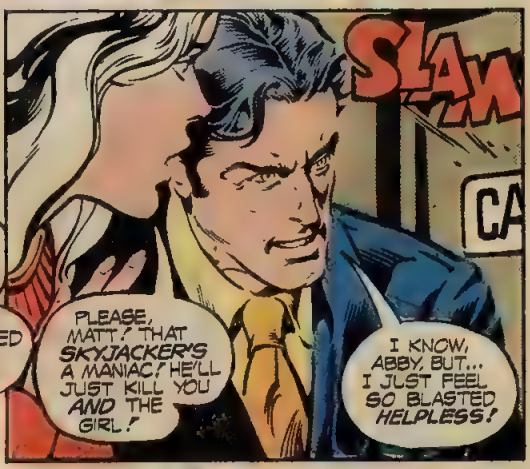
NO, EVIL ONE! YOU'LL NOT HARM THESE INNOCENTS! IT WAS I WHO BROUGHT YOU INTO THIS WORLD, AND IF ANYONE MUST SUFFER FOR IT--
--LET IT BE ME!
AS YOU WISH, HOLY MAN!
ONCE MORE THE SHRILL DEMON-SCREAM LANCES THE AIR--
--ONLY THIS TIME IT IS NOT A CRY OF PAIN--BUT ONE OF TRIUMPH...
AND WHEN THE WHINING DIES..
THIS BODY IS OLD, FEEBLE--BUT APPEARANCE IS OF NO IMPORTANCE! WHAT MATTERS IS POWER, AND MY POWER REMAINS UNDIMINISHED!
POWER TO SHATTER SOULS, SUNDER WORLDS, TO RULE THE VERY--
BUT, AS THE UNCOMPREHENDING DEMON IS SOON TO LEARN, THERE CAN BE SUCH A THING AS TOO MUCH POWER...
WHA-? I'M... SMOLDERING! THIS BODY--IT'S TOO FRAIL! IT CAN'T CONTAIN MY MYSTIC ENERGY!
MY VERY ESSENCE IS CAUSING IT TO BURN UP--FROM THE INSIDE!
AND THERE'S NO TIME... TO TAKE... ANOTHER BODY! I'M... TRAPPED!
DAMN THAT BLISS! HE KNEW... THIS WOULD HAPPEN! HE... KNEW WWWWWWWW...
DARTING TONGUES OF FLAME LICK OUTWARD FROM THE RUINED PRIEST'S CHARRING FLESH--
--AND FOR THE BRIEFEST OF INSTANTS, HOLLOW EYES LIGHT WITH A GLOW OF INFINITE SADNESS--AND A WISDOM TOO LATE IN THE LEARNING...
FORGIVE... ME...
19

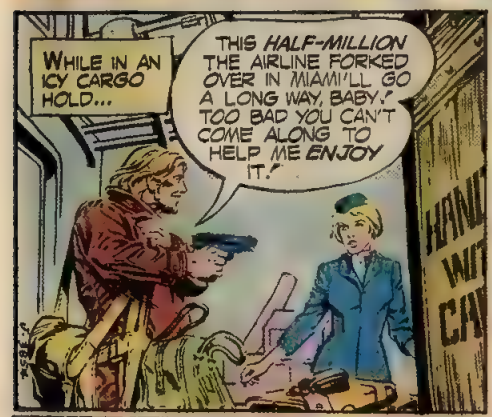

A LOW RUMBLE SUFFUSES ITSELF THROUGH THE ANCIENT MASONRY, QUIVERING THE STONE AS IF THE VERY HEAVENS THEMSELVES WERE ANGRY AT LOSING ONE OF THEIR OWN...
MOVE! BEFORE THE PLACE COMES DOWN AROUND OUR EARS!
AND THEN, WITH A WHISPER THAT MIGHT BE A SIGH, THE EARTH SHRUGS, THE TIMEWORN EDIFICE CRUMBLES--
KWOOMPH
--AND THE LEGACY OF FATHER JONATHON BLISS BECOMES A CLUTTER OF RUBBLED GRANITE AND DREAMS...
EPILOGUE! IN THE AFTERMATH...
POOR LUKE. HE CAME ALONG OUT OF FRIENDSHIP, ONLY TO END UP... LIKE...
DON'T THINK ABOUT IT, ABBY. WHAT WE HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT NOW IS GETTING ALEC SOMEPLACE WHERE WE CAN COMMUNICATE-- SO LUKE'S DEATH WON'T BE IN VAIN!
MATT CABLE'S QUESTIONING EYES FOLLOW THE MOSS-DRAPED FINGER--AND FREEZE AS THEY LOCK ON AN EERILY FAMILIAR SHAPE SOARING BY OVERHEAD--
--A SHAPE THAT DANGLES AN EVEN MORE FAMILIAR, DEATHLY-STILL FIGURE BEHIND IT...
BOLT!
SO COME ON. BOLT SHOULD BE WAITING AT THE RENDEZVOUS POINT BY NOW AND--EH? WHAT IS IT, ALEC?
I DON'T THINK... ANYONE'S WAITING ANYWHERE, MATTHEW... LOOK...
NEXT ISSUE:
NIGHT OF THE WARRING DEAD

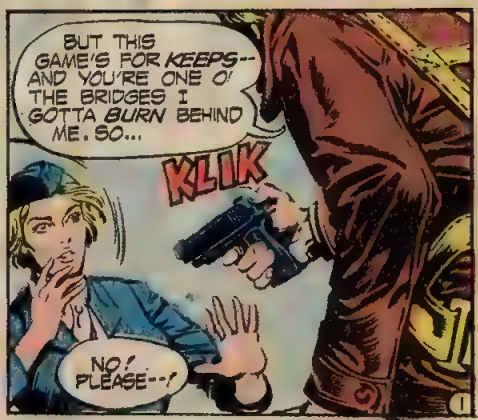
THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
25¢
NO. 16
MAY
30686
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SWAMP THING


ANGRY CLOUDS PAINT THE EARLY WINTER DAWN, A CHILL GREY, FRAMING A CHURNING 747 IN A NIMBUS OF TURBULENT HAZE...
BUT THE FURY OF NATURE CAN ONLY PALE BEFORE THE CONFLICT OCCURRING WITHIN THIS GREAT METAL BIRD--FOR THEREIN ROILS A MOST HUMAN TEMPEST. ONE CALLED--


--TERROR!
CARGO
MATT, DON'T!
THAT'S RIGHT, HERO--SIDDOWN! 'CAUSE IF ANYONE FOLLOWS ME THE LITTLE LADY HERE GETS HER BRAINS SPLATTERED OVER HALF THE CARIBBEAN--DIG?




WHILE IN AN ICY CARGO HOLD...
THIS HALF-MILLION THE AIRLINE FORKED OVER IN MIAMI'LL GO A LONG WAY, BABY.' TOO BAD YOU CAN'T COME ALONG TO HELP ME ENJOY IT.'



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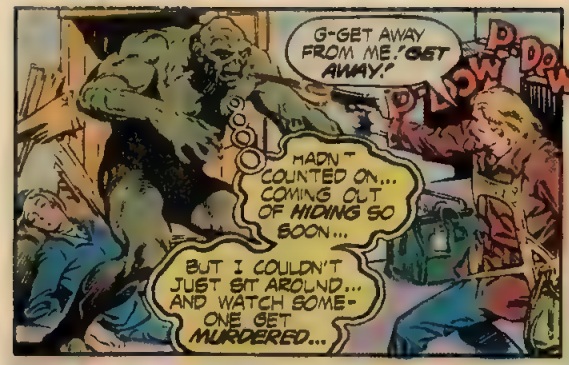
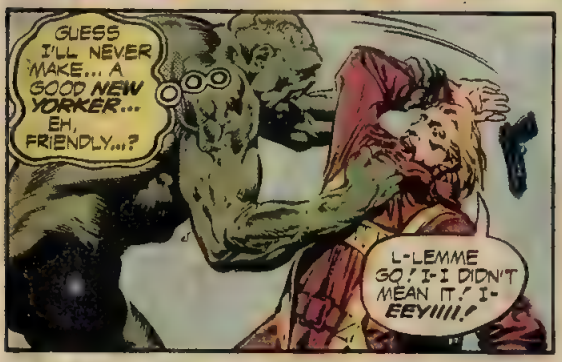
SOME WOULD SAY THAT THERE'S NO SUCH THING AS JUSTICE IN TODAY'S WORLD-- BUT WATCH: AS THE HULKING, TWISTED MAN-MONSTER WHO WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND CRASHES OUTWARD, SPLINTERING THE HARD WOODEN WALLS OF HIS CONFINEMENT LIKE BALSA IN A CHILD'S HAND--
--THEN OBSERVE: AS THE COLD, FERAL EYES OF A WOULD-BE ASSASSIN DILATE, WIDENING WITH THE REALIZATION THAT THOSE SELFSAME MOSSY LIMBS MAY SOON RENDER THE SAME FATE--
--TO HIM!
NO!!
SWAMP THING
WHA--?! OH, MY DEAR LORD!
SPLATCH

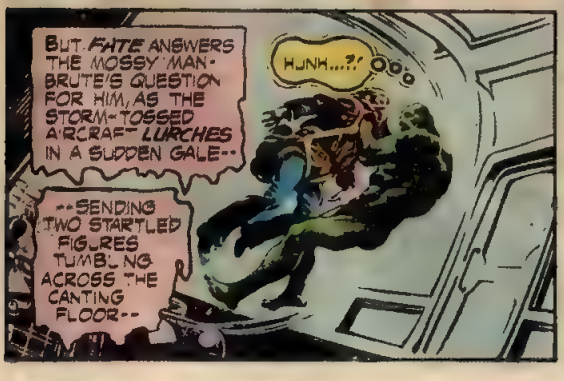
NIGHT OF THE WARRIOR DEAD

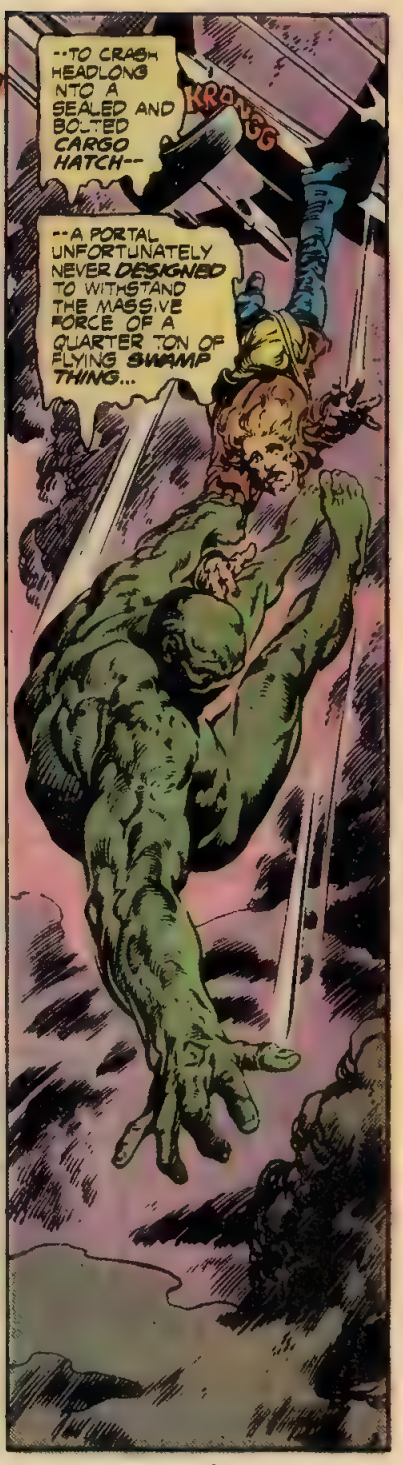
DAVID MICHELINIE (WRITER) · NESTOR REDONDO (ILLUSTRATOR) · JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION

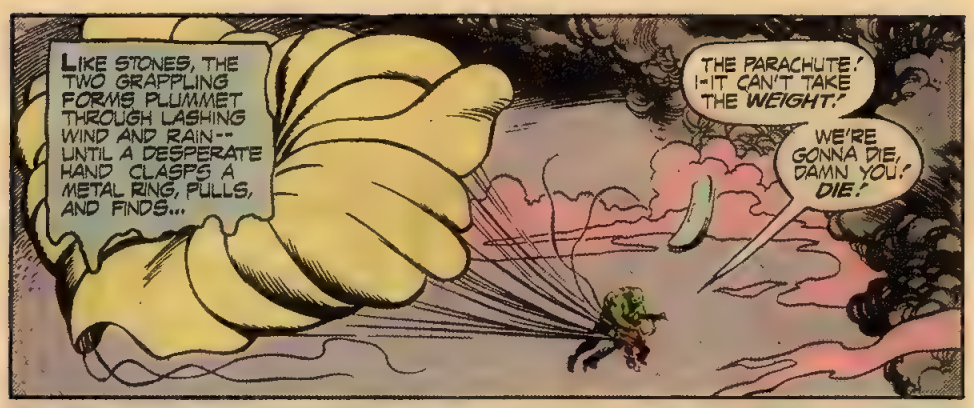

G-GET AWAY FROM ME! GET AWAY!
P-POW
P-POW
HADN'T COUNTED ON... COMING OUT OF HIDING SO SOON...
BUT I COULDN'T JUST SIT AROUND... AND WATCH SOMEONE GET MURDERED...

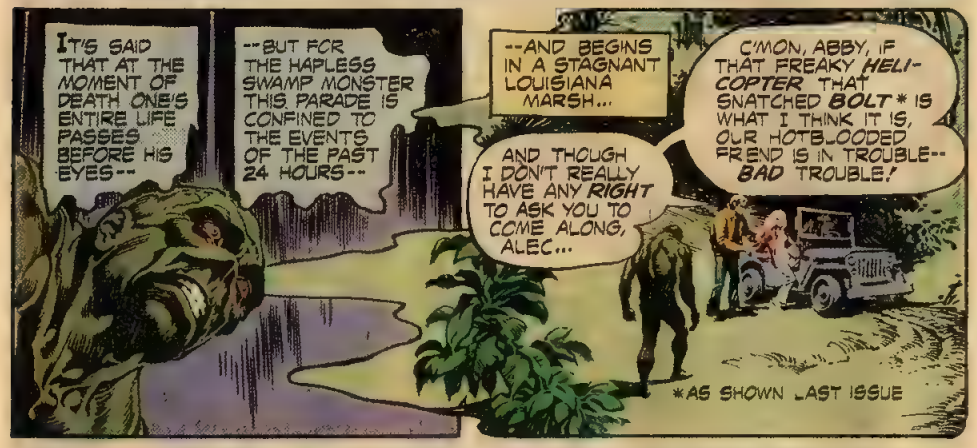

GUESS I'LL NEVER MAKE... A GOOD NEW YORKER... EH, FRIENDLY...?
L-LEMME GO! I-I DIDN'T MEAN IT! I-EEYIIII!

GOOD THING... THE STEWARDESS FAINTED...! SHE'LL PROBABLY PASS ME OFF... AS HYSTERIA WHEN SHE COMES TO...
ONLY WHAT DO I DO... WITH YOU NOW--THAT--


BUT FATE ANSWERS THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE'S QUESTION FOR HIM, AS THE STORM-TOSSED AIRCRAFT LURCHES IN A SUDDEN GALE--
HUNH...?!
--SENDING TWO STARTLED FIGURES TUMBLING ACROSS THE CANTING FLOOR--


--TO CRASH HEADLONG INTO A SEALED AND BOLTED CARGO HATCH--
KRAAGG
--A PORTAL UNFORTUNATELY NEVER DESIGNED TO WITHSTAND THE MASSIVE FORCE OF A QUARTER TON OF FLYING SWAMP THING...


LIKE STONES, THE TWO GRAPPLING FORMS PLUMMET THROUGH LASHING WIND AND RAIN-- UNTIL A DESPERATE HAND CLASPS A METAL RING, PULLS, AND FINDS...
THE PARACHUTE! IT CAN'T TAKE THE WEIGHT!
WE'RE GONNA DIE, DAMN YOU! DIE!

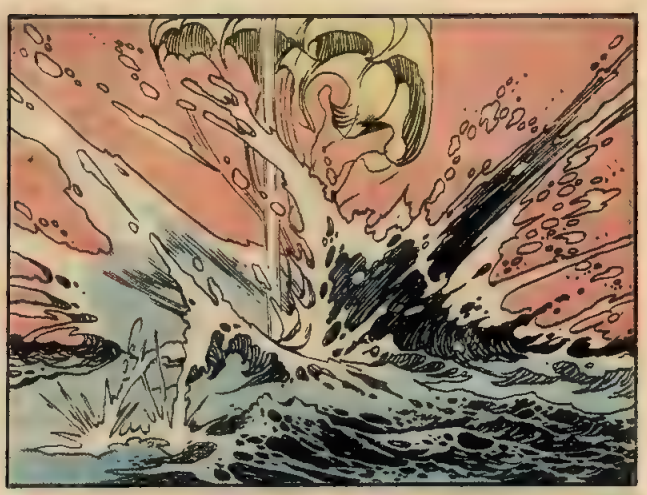

IT'S SAID THAT AT THE MOMENT OF DEATH ONE'S ENTIRE LIFE PASSES BEFORE HIS EYES--
--BUT FOR THE HAPLESS SWAMP MONSTER THIS PARADE IS CONFINED TO THE EVENTS OF THE PAST 24 HOURS--
--AND BEGINS IN A STAGNANT LOUISIANA MARSH...
AND THOUGH I DON'T REALLY HAVE ANY RIGHT TO ASK YOU TO COME ALONG, ALEC...
C'MON, ABBY, IF THAT FREAKY HELICOPTER THAT SNATCHED BOLT* IS WHAT I THINK IT IS, OUR HOTBLOODED FRIEND IS IN TROUBLE-- BAD TROUBLE!
*AS SHOWN LAST ISSUE

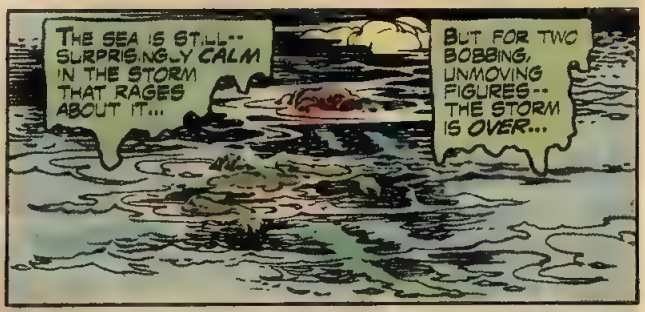
AND SO, WITH THE QUARRY HURRIEDLY TRACKED TO A PRIVATE ISLAND NESTLED IN THE CARIBBEAN, THE QUEST HAD BEGUN--
--WITH SPECIAL PREPARATIONS BEING MADE FOR A MOST UNUSUAL PASSENGER...

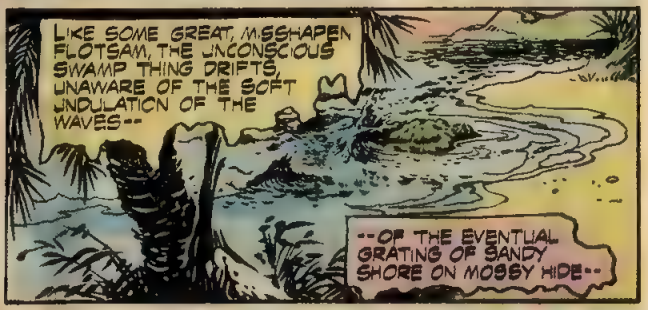
ONLY CHANCE HAD HAD THE LAST LAUGH--AS AN UNEXPECTED ELEMENT HAD ENTERED THE GAME...
AN ELEMENT THAT MOCKS EVEN AS MEMORY DISSOLVES--

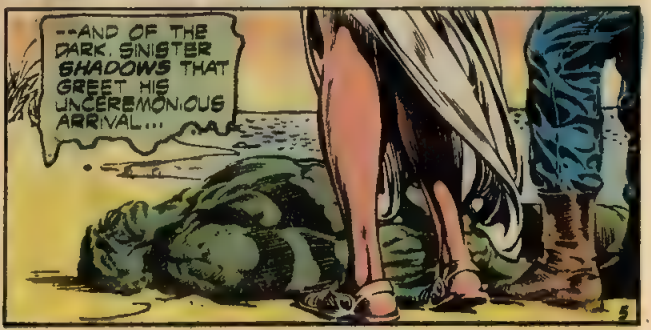
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

--BACK TO THE COLD, HARD STING OF REALITY...
WATER... COMING UP FAST... GOT TO TRY AND LAND FIRST... CUSHION THE BLOW SO THAT...
NO... IT'S NO GOOD...! WE'RE FALLING TOO FAST... GOING TO--

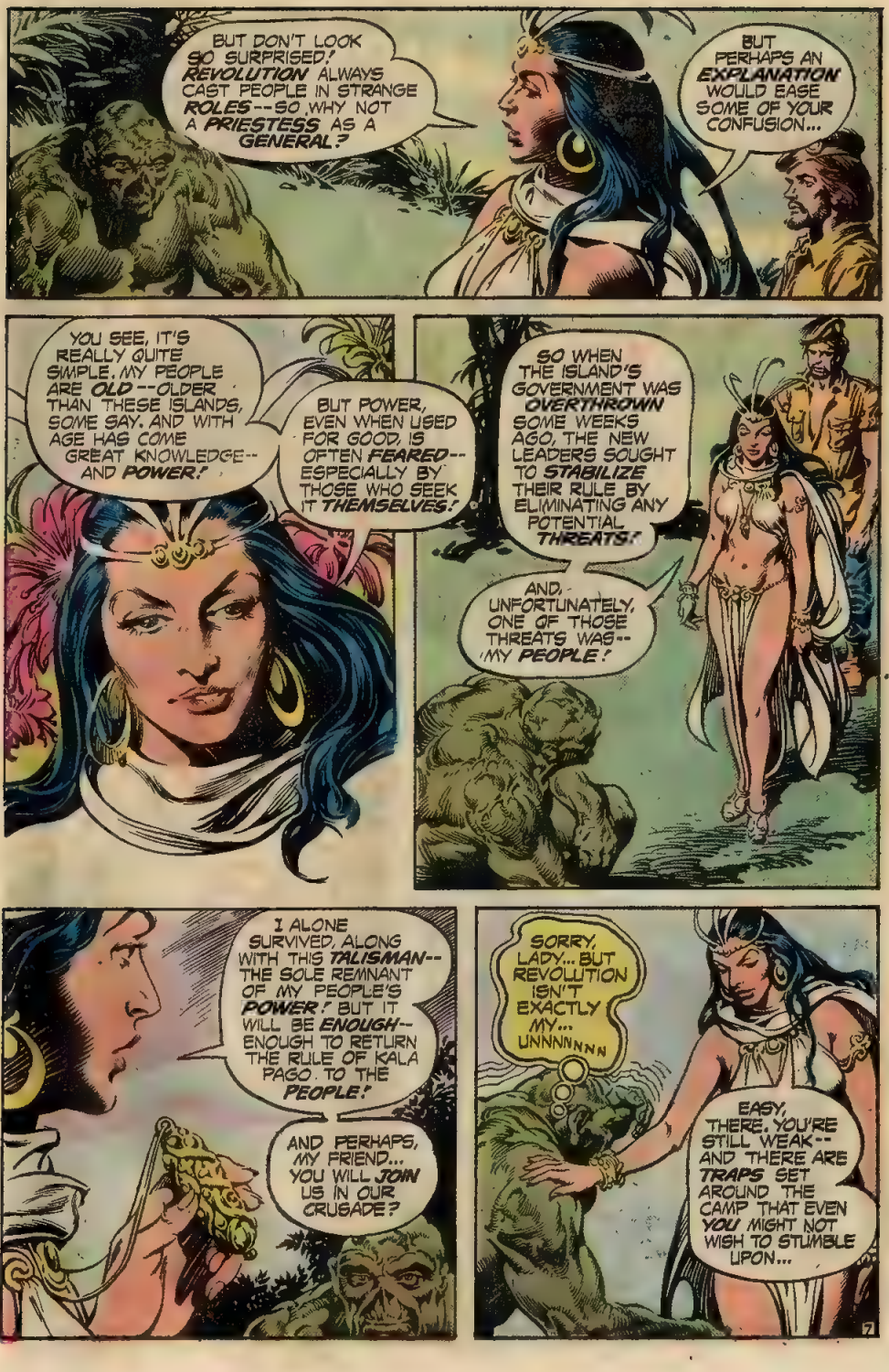



THE SEA IS STILL-- SURPRISINGLY CALM IN THE STORM THAT RAGES ABOUT IT...
BUT FOR TWO BOBBING, UNMOVING FIGURES-- THE STORM IS OVER...

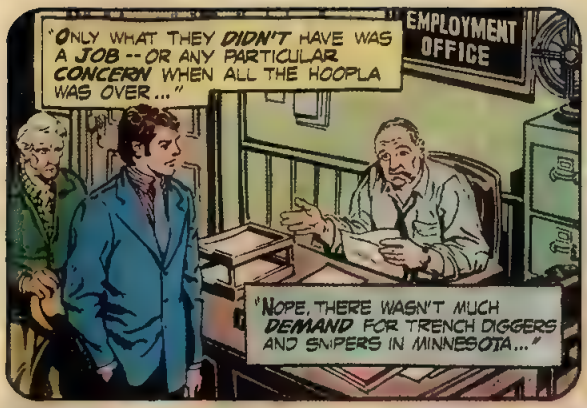

LIKE SOME GREAT, MISSHAPEN FLOTSAM, THE UNCONSCIOUS SWAMP THING DRIFTS, UNAWARE OF THE SOFT UNDULATION OF THE WAVES--
--OF THE EVENTUAL GRATING OF SANDY SHORE ON MOSSY HIDE--

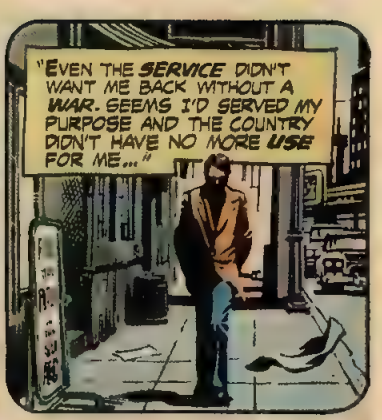

--AND OF THE DARK, SINISTER SHADOWS THAT GREET HIS UNCEREMONIOUS ARRIVAL...

OTHERWHERE!
A HIDDEN JUNGLE SANCTUARY, SEVERAL MILES AWAY...
YOUR WILL IS STRONG, MY DEAR BOLT--BUT I ASSURE YOU, MY WILL IS STRONGER! YOU WILL SAVE US ALL MUCH...UNPLEASANTNESS IF YOU WILL TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW!
SPREAD BUTTER, FAT MAN!
VERY WELL, MR. BOLT--IT'S YOUR MIND!
CONTINUE THE "TREATMENTS," DR. PRETORIUS!
YES, SIR!
A GENTLE GRAZE OF FINGERTIPS ON ROOT-TANGLED BROW--AND AWARENESS RETURNS TO A WEAK AND SHAKEN MAN-BRUTE...
LOOK, ADAM! HE'S COMING TO!
WHO... WHERE...?
EASY, NOW, YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS! YOU WERE FOUND ON A BEACH AND BROUGHT HERE WHERE I USED CERTAIN ABILITIES TO TOUCH YOUR SOUL--AND FIND THAT YOU'RE AS MUCH AN OUTCAST AS WE ARE!
FOR YOU SEE, YOU'RE ON THE ISLAND OF KALA PAGO, IN THE CAMP OF THE PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY! THIS IS ADAM ROOK AND I'M LAGANNA--
--HIGH PRIESTESS OF THE PEOPLE OF SEPP!
6

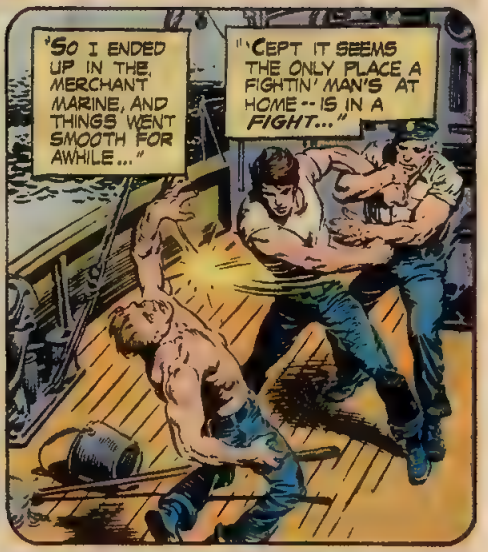

BUT DON'T LOOK SO SURPRISED! REVOLUTION ALWAYS CAST PEOPLE IN STRANGE ROLES--SO WHY NOT A PRIESTESS AS A GENERAL?
BUT PERHAPS AN EXPLANATION WOULD EASE SOME OF YOUR CONFUSION...
YOU SEE, IT'S REALLY QUITE SIMPLE. MY PEOPLE ARE OLD--OLDER THAN THESE ISLANDS, SOME SAY. AND WITH AGE HAS COME GREAT KNOWLEDGE--AND POWER!
BUT POWER, EVEN WHEN USED FOR GOOD, IS OFTEN FEARED--ESPECIALLY BY THOSE WHO SEEK IT THEMSELVES!
SO WHEN THE ISLAND'S GOVERNMENT WAS OVERTHROWN SOME WEEKS AGO, THE NEW LEADERS SOUGHT TO STABILIZE THEIR RULE BY ELIMINATING ANY POTENTIAL THREATS!
AND, UNFORTUNATELY, ONE OF THOSE THREATS WAS--MY PEOPLE!
I ALONE SURVIVED, ALONG WITH THIS TALISMAN--THE SOLE REMNANT OF MY PEOPLE'S POWER! BUT IT WILL BE ENOUGH--ENOUGH TO RETURN THE RULE OF KALA PAGO TO THE PEOPLE!
AND PERHAPS, MY FRIEND... YOU WILL JOIN US IN OUR CRUSADE?
SORRY, LADY... BUT REVOLUTION ISN'T EXACTLY MY... UNNNNNNN
EASY, THERE. YOU'RE STILL WEAK--AND THERE ARE TRAPS SET AROUND THE CAMP THAT EVEN YOU MIGHT NOT WISH TO STUMBLE UPON...

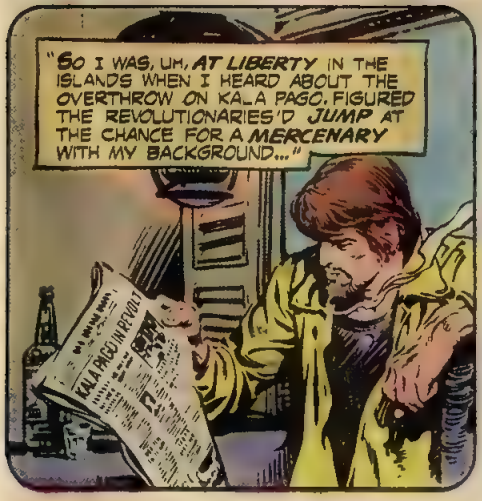
SO YOU JUST REST AWHILE-- CONSIDER MY PROPOSITION. ADAM WILL SEE TO ANY OF YOUR NEEDS WHILE I MAKE CERTAIN... PREPARATIONS.
THE LITHE GIRL DEPARTS, LEAVING AN UNEASY SILENCE TO FILL THE STEAMY GLADE--
--A SILENCE APPARENTLY INCOMPATIBLE WITH THE FRAYED NERVES OF A CERTAIN YOUNG GUERRILLA, FOR...
YOU'LL, UH, HAVE TO EXCUSE MY AWKWARDNESS, FELLA. I'VE FOUGHT THROUGH A LOT OF SWAMPS IN MY TIME--BUT I NEVER TRIED TALKIN' TO ONE!
BUT YOU DON'T LIKE FIGHTIN', DO YA? WELL, I CAN'T SAY AS I BLAME YA MUCH-- I DON'T EITHER!
SO THEN, WHAT AM I DOING HERE, A THOUSAND MILES FROM NOWHERE FIGHTIN' IN SOME TWO-BIT REVOLUTION I COULD CARE LESS ABOUT? WELL, THAT'S A LONG STORY--
--BUT SEEIN' AS YOU SEEM TO BE HAVIN' TROUBLE HOLDIN' UP YOUR END OF THE CONVERSATION...
"THE WHOLE MESS STARTED WHEN I JOINED THE MARINES SOME YEARS AGO. THOUGHT I'D BE A REGULAR JOHN WAYNE..."
"ONLY A FEW MONTHS IN 'NAM TAUGHT ME THAT REAL DYIN' AIN'T QUITE SO GLORIOUS AS IT IS IN THE MOVIES..."
"BUT I LEARNED SOLDIERIN', ALL RIGHT. LEARNED IT REAL GOOD. AN' WHEN THE WAR WAS OVER THE FOLKS BACK HOME HAD NO END OF MEDALS AND KIND WORDS FOR ME..."
JOSEPHVILLE
WELCOME HOME
CONTINUED ON 35P PAGE FOLLOWING.
8


EMPLOYMENT OFFICE
"ONLY WHAT THEY DIDN'T HAVE WAS A JOB -- OR ANY PARTICULAR CONCERN WHEN ALL THE HOOPLA WAS OVER..."
"NOPE, THERE WASN'T MUCH DEMAND FOR TRENCH DIGGERS AND SNIPERS IN MINNESOTA..."


"EVEN THE SERVICE DIDN'T WANT ME BACK WITHOUT A WAR. SEEMS I'D SERVED MY PURPOSE AND THE COUNTRY DIDN'T HAVE NO MORE USE FOR ME..."

FIND YOUR FUTURE IN THE ARMY
"BUT WHY SHOULD THEY? HELL, ALL I'D DONE WAS RISK MY LIFE FOR 'EM!"


"SO I ENDED UP IN THE MERCHANT MARINE, AND THINGS WENT SMOOTH FOR AWHILE..."
"'CEPT IT SEEMS THE ONLY PLACE A FIGHTIN' MAN'S AT HOME -- IS IN A FIGHT..."


"SO I WAS, UH, AT LIBERTY IN THE ISLANDS WHEN I HEARD ABOUT THE OVERTHROW ON KA_A PAGO. FIGURED THE REVOLUTIONARIES'D JUMP AT THE CHANCE FOR A MERCENARY WITH MY BACKGROUND..."
KA_A PAGO IN REVOLT

"ONLY I HADN'T COUNTED ON THE, UH, BREVITY OF LOCAL 'DISAGREEMENTS'..."
"--SEEMS I WAS A BIT LATE FOR THE WAR..."

THAT'S WHEN I MET UP WITH LAGANNA. I HAD THE MILITARY SKILLS SHE WAS LOOKING FOR AND SHE HAD WHAT I NEEDED--"
"--A WAR!"
"I'LL ADMIT HER METHODS--TO SAY NOTHING OF HER ARMY--SET ME BACK A BIT AT FIRST--"
"--BUT AFTER YOU'VE SEEN ALL THE BATTLE-FIELD LEFTOVERS I HAVE, NOTHIN' SHAKES YOU UP FOR LONG..."
SOMETHING TELLS ME OUR FRIEND HAS KNOWN HIS SHARE OF HORROR, TOO, ADAM. PERHAPS ENOUGH TO MAKE OURS SEEM PALE IN COMPARISON.
BUT TONIGHT WE MAY HAVE A CHANCE TO END ONE KIND OF HORROR.
COME...
TENSION RIDES THE SOFT JUNGLE BREEZE AS IT FOLLOWS THE MISMATCHED TRIO ALONG A SHORT, TWISTING PATHWAY TO...
...A GRAVE-YARD...?!
HERE IN THIS FETID PLACE LIE THE REMAINS OF THOSE WHO FOUGHT TYRANNY ON OUR ISLAND--BUT HAD THE ILL FORTUNE TO DIE ON THE LOSING SIDE!
CONTINUED ON 5 PAGE FOLLOWS

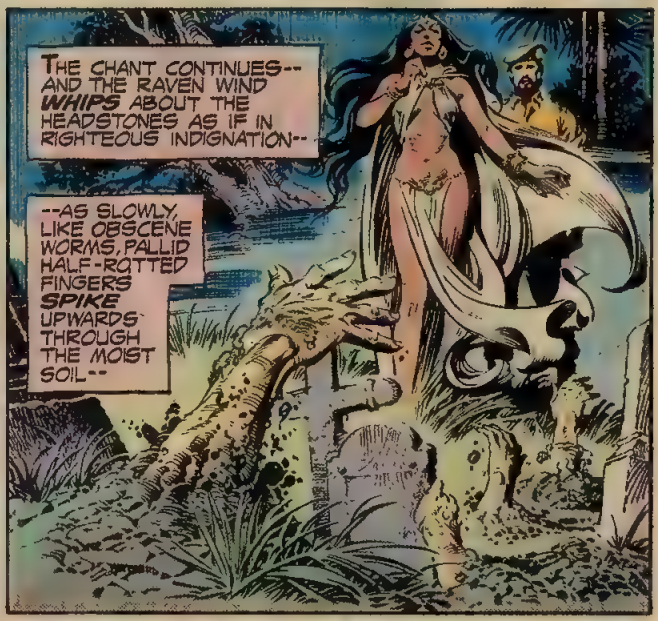
AND IT IS HERE WHERE OUR ARMY LIES! FOR IT IS THEIR SPIRIT OF FREEDOM THAT IS OUR STRENGTH!
AN ARMY OF SPOOKS...? I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN...THEY'RE JUST TWO LOONIES OUT IN THE JUNGLE... WITH DELUSIONS OF--
BUT THE SWAMP THING'S CAUSTIC THOUGHTS END ABRUPTLY AS...
LOOK! THERE THEY ARE!
AND THEY'VE GOT SOME KIND OF MONSTER WITH THEM!
GOVERNMENT TROOPS! THEY MUST HAVE TRAILED US FROM THE ARMORY WE RAIDED!
BANG BANG
WELL, LOONIES OR NOT...THOSE TWO HELPED ME...
AND ANYWAY... I NEVER WAS A BIG FAN ...OF SELF-PROCLAIMED DICTATORSHIPS...
BOK
UNF!
BLAM
LOST IN THE CONCENTRATION OF BATTLE, THE RAGING SWAMP THING DOESN'T SEE HIS FRIENDS ESCAPE TO THE SAFETY OF THE JUNGLE--
--NOR, UNFORTUNATELY DOES HE SEE THE HIDDEN TRIP WIRE BENEATH HIS ENCUMBERED FOOT...
"...THERE ARE TRAPS SET AROUND THE CAMP THAT EVEN YOU MIGHT NOT WISH TO STUMBLE UPON..."
SWAK

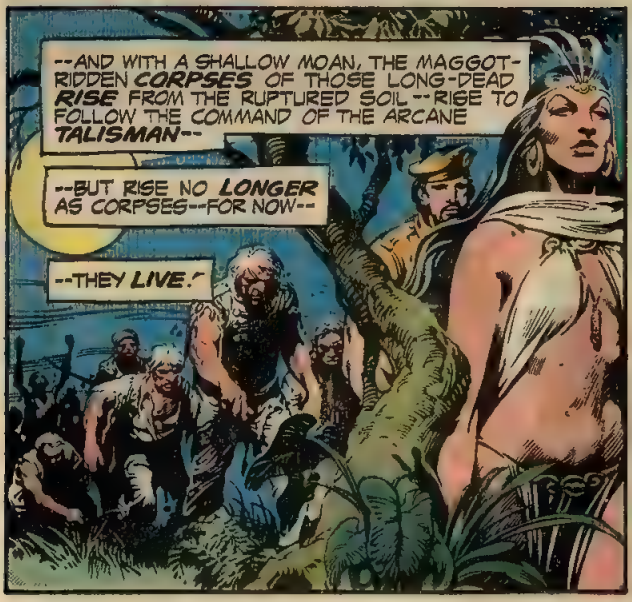
THERE IS A MOMENT OF TENDER PAIN --
THE BEAST! I-IT NO LONGER MOVES!
--AND THEN THE SOFT VELVET BLACKNESS--
QUICKLY! BIND IT!
--OF LIMBO...
KNUMP
OTHERWHERE 2
WHILE ON A SEPARATE ISLAND...
WELL, MATT, WHAT NOW?
IT'S A QUESTION OF PRIORITIES, ABBY. WE STARTED OUT LOOKING FOR BOLT-- AND THAT'S STILL OUR PRIME OBJECTIVE!
IT'S WHAT ALEC WOULD WANT...
AND, ANYWAY, I THINK ALEC CAN TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF...
12

IRONIC WORDS, AS FOR THE SECOND TIME IN LESS THAN A DAY A SLIME-DRAPED MONSTROSITY CLAWS AWAY THE PALL OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS--ONLY TO FIND...
CHAINS...! I'M IN SOME KIND OF... JAIL...!
WELL I'M SORRY... BUT I FIND THIS MUCK-ROTTED BODY OF MINE... PRISON ENOUGH FOR ONE MAN...
AND I'M NOT ABOUT TO SUBJECT MYSELF...
...TO ANY OTHER...!
THE MONSTER! I-IT'S ESCAPING! CALL THE SOLDIERS--QUICKLY!
WHROYNK
WHILE IN THE JUNGLE, A DARK, CLINGING FOG SLIPS SILENTLY BETWEEN CRUMBLING HEADSTONES --AS A PALE MOON ETCHES WAN SHADOWS OVER ONCE-HALLOWED GROUND...
THE TIME IS COME, ADAM.
SOFTLY, LIKE THE CALL OF SOME TRILLING NIGHTBIRD, A MELODIC CHANT RISES FROM THE YOUNG GIRL'S THROAT--
--SPILLING WORDS OF A RACE LONG FORGOTTEN AMONG THE ANCIENT GRAVES-- AND WITH A DARK RUMBLE OF THEIR OWN...
...THE GRAVES ANSWER!

KA'RASH
THE BEAST!
IT TEARS THROUGH STONE--AS IF IT WERE PAPER!
EEEEEEEEEE!

EVERYWHERE I GO...I'M USED, BEATEN OR CHAINED...AND FRANKLY...
...I'VE JUST ABOUT HAD IT...!


THE CHANT CONTINUES--AND THE RAVEN WIND WHIPS ABOUT THE HEADSTONES AS IF IN RIGHTEOUS INDIGNATION--
--AS SLOWLY, LIKE OBSCENE WORMS, PALLID HALF-ROTTED FINGERS SPIKE UPWARDS THROUGH THE MOIST SOIL--

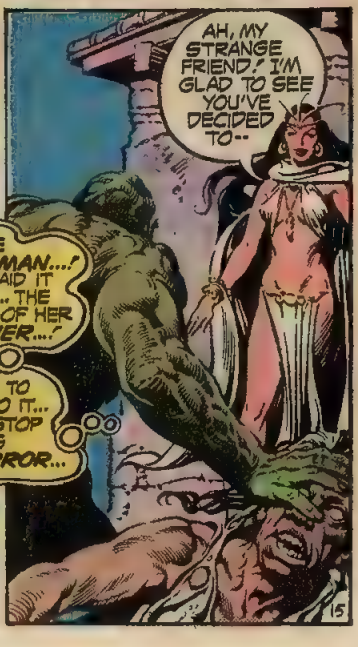

--AND WITH A SHALLOW MOAN, THE MAGGOT-RIDDEN CORPSES OF THOSE LONG-DEAD RISE FROM THE RUPTURED SOIL--RISE TO FOLLOW THE COMMAND OF THE ARCANE TALISMAN--
--BUT RISE NO LONGER AS CORPSES--FOR NOW--
--THEY LIVE!

IF I CAN JUST... WADE THROUGH THESE OVER-ZEALOUS BOY SCOUTS...AND REACH THE JUNGLE...I CAN...
!!!EEEEE! EL MUERTO! EL MUERTO!

SHOCK ICES THE EMBATTLED PLAZA WITH A GLAZE OF TREMULOUS FEAR--
--CAUSING EVEN THE SWAMP THING'S MISSHAPEN SPINE TO SPASM IN INVOLUNTARY SHUDDER...
OH... MY... DEAR... GOD...

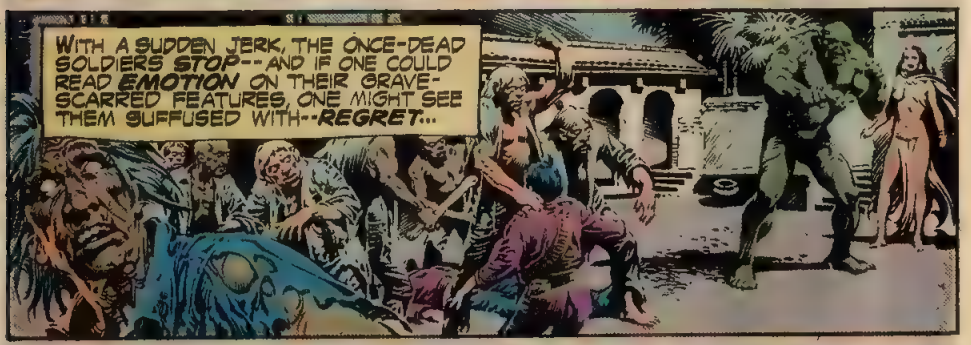
AND THEN THEY MEET-- THE ARMY OF THE ONCE-DEAD--AND THE ARMY OF THE SOON-DEAD...
BAM
BAM
BAM
BAM
AND THOSE WHO WOULD CALL IT SLAUGHTER-- WOULD BE TOO KIND...

LORD...! NO ONE DESERVES TO DIE...LIKE THIS...! I CAN UNDERSTAND LAGANNA'S MOTIVES... BUT THERE HAS TO BE ANOTHER WAY...
THERE HAS TO BE...
THE TALISMAN...! SHE SAID IT WAS... THE ROOT OF HER POWER...!
GOT TO GET TO IT... AND STOP THIS HORROR...


AH, MY STRANGE FRIEND! I'M GLAD TO SEE YOU'VE DECIDED TO--

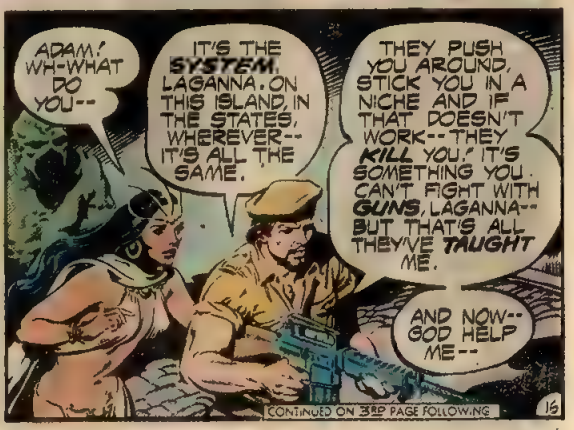
WHA-?! THE TALISMAN! NO, YOU MUSTN'T--!
YES, LAGANNA... I MUST...
FOR THE SAKE OF SANITY...

...I MUST...
THRUNCH

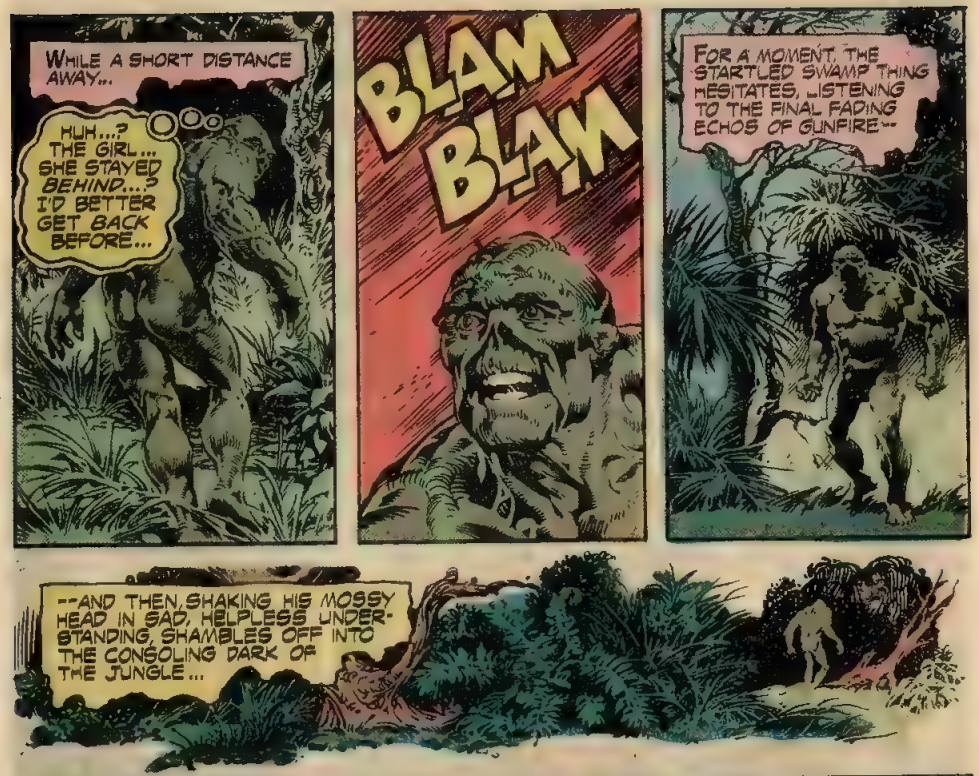

WITH A SUDDEN JERK, THE ONCE-DEAD SOLDIERS STOP--AND IF ONE COULD READ EMOTION ON THEIR GRAVE-SCARRED FEATURES, ONE MIGHT SEE THEM SUFFUSED WITH--REGRET...

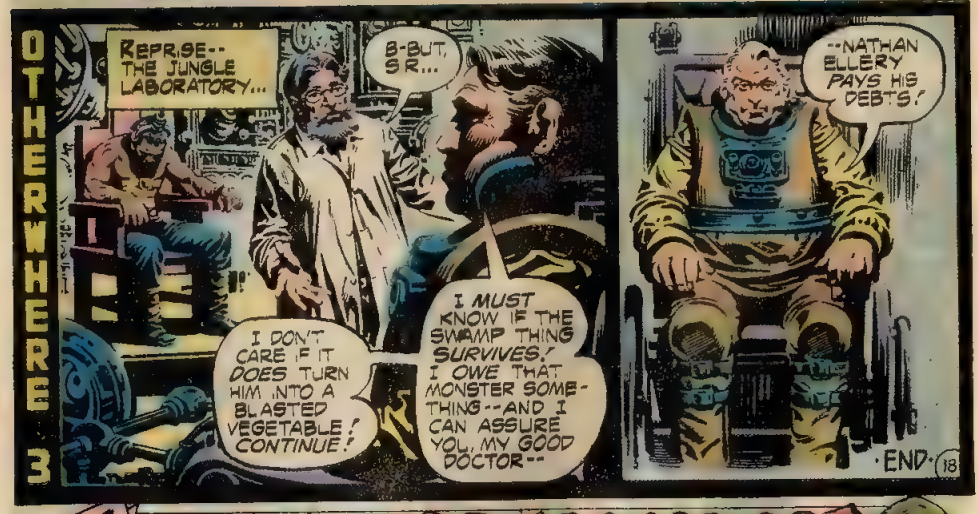
AND THEN, WITH A SOFT, TREMBLING SIGH, THEY CRUMBLE TO THE SCARLET-STREAKED EARTH, THEIR DUST AND MOULDERED BONES MINGLING WITH THE SHATTERED REMNANTS OF A YOUNG GIRL'S DREAMS...

WE'VE... LOST, ADAM. IT... IT'S OVER.
MAYBE FOR YOU, LADY, BUT--
--NOT FOR ME!


ADAM! WH-WHAT DO YOU--
IT'S THE SYSTEM, LAGANNA. ON THIS ISLAND, IN THE STATES, WHEREVER--IT'S ALL THE SAME.
THEY PUSH YOU AROUND, STICK YOU IN A NICHE AND IF THAT DOESN'T WORK--THEY KILL YOU! IT'S SOMETHING YOU CAN'T FIGHT WITH GUNS, LAGANNA--BUT THAT'S ALL THEY'VE TAUGHT ME.
AND NOW--GOD HELP ME--
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

--IT'S ALL I KNOW!
!
ADAM--!
BDOW-DOW-DOW
THE END COMES QUICKLY--
--AND ADAM ROOK, THE WARRIOR DESPITE HIMSELF, EXPECTS NO LESS...
COME ON, LADY... THERE'S NOTHING YOU CAN DO FOR HIM NOW...
BUT WE'VE STILL GOT A CHANCE... WHILE THOSE SOLDIERS ARE OCCUPIED...
BUT AS THE SWAMP THING LURCHES INTO THE CONCEALING UNDERGROWTH, CLEARING THE WAY--
--A LOOK OF WEARY RESIGNATION CROSSES THE GIRL'S EBON EYES--AND SHE TURNS...
LAGANNA... S-SAVE... YOURSELF... I-I'M... AGH... GONE... UUUUUUUU
NO, ADAM, MY FIGHT IS OVER. I'M TIRED... AND I'M BEATEN.
THERE WILL BE OTHERS COME TO FIGHT THE YOKE OF TYRANNY--AND I'LL LEAVE THE BATTLE TO THEM.
PERHAPS THEY WILL BE WISER THAN US. PERHAPS THEY WILL REALIZE--
--THERE ARE SOME THINGS THAT TAKE MORE THAN A MERE ARMY... TO CONQUER...
17


WHILE A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY...
HUH...? THE GIRL... SHE STAYED BEHIND...? I'D BETTER GET BACK BEFORE...
BLAM BLAM
FOR A MOMENT, THE STARTLED SWAMP THING HESITATES, LISTENING TO THE FINAL FADING ECHOS OF GUNFIRE--
--AND THEN, SHAKING HIS MOSSY HEAD IN SAD, HELPLESS UNDERSTANDING, SHAMBLES OFF INTO THE CONSOLING DARK OF THE JUNGLE...


OTHERWHERE 3
REPRISE-- THE JUNGLE LABORATORY...
B-BUT, SIR...
I DON'T CARE IF IT DOES TURN HIM INTO A BLASTED VEGETABLE! CONTINUE!
I MUST KNOW IF THE SWAMP THING SURVIVES! I OWE THAT MONSTER SOMETHING--AND I CAN ASSURE YOU, MY GOOD DOCTOR--
--NATHAN ELLERY PAYS HIS DEBTS!
END
18

NEXT:
THE DESTINY MACHINE
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN APRIL

THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
SWAMP THING
25¢
NO. 17
JULY
30686
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

SANOBEL MISSION: IT CRACKS THE FOREST CLEARING LIKE A DEAD-TOOTHED SMILE, QUIET AND SERENE AS THE VERDANT JUNGLE THAT SURROUNDS IT...
BUT AS WITH MAN, APPEARANCES CAN OFT BE DECEIVING--AND A BUILDING'S PEACEFUL FACADE CAN SOMETIMES MASK--
--A MOST DESPERATE TURMOIL WITHIN...
COME, COME, MR. BOLT. SOONER OR LATER, YOU WILL TELL ME WHAT I WANT TO KNOW. SO WHY DON'T YOU--
J-3965
EAT... MOOSE... YOU... DIRTY...
YOUR OBSTINACY BEGINS TO BORE ME, MR. BOLT.
DR. PRETORIUS! INCREASE THE--
MR. E.! BLIPS ON THE DETECTION SCREENS!
ONE INTRUDER ACTIVATING TRAP 34 ON THE EASTERN PERIMETER--AND TWO OTHERS MOVING IN FROM THE WEST!
WELL, DON'T JUST SIT THERE, IMBECILE! SEND A TASK FORCE TO "GREET" OUR VISITORS FROM THE WEST!
AND WHAT ABOUT THE OTHER ONE, SIR?
YOU FORGET I DESIGNED THE DEFENSES MYSELF, DOLT! WHEN #34 FINISHES WITH OUR UNWITTING TRESPASSER--
--THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH LEFT OF HIM TO BURY!
1

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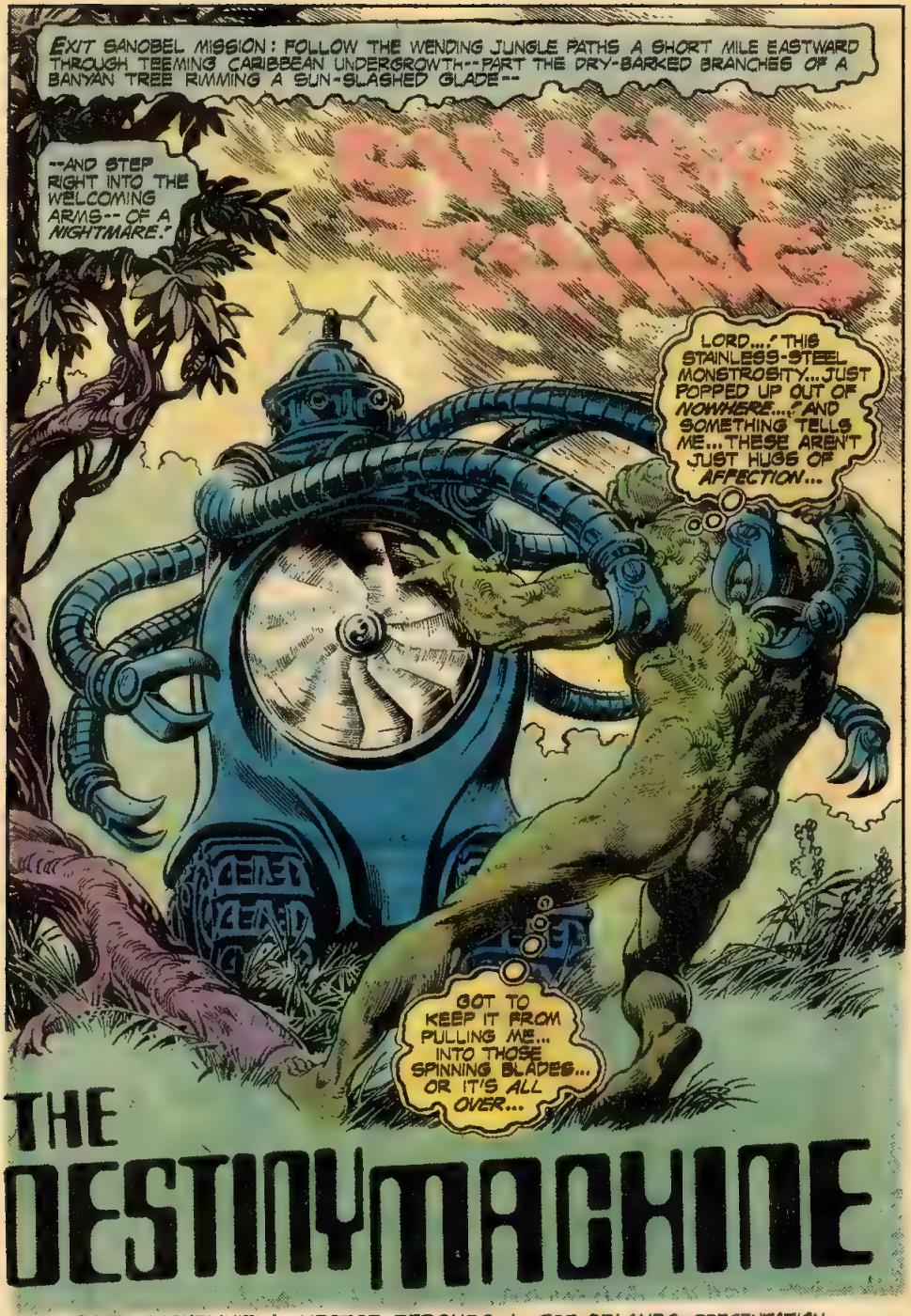
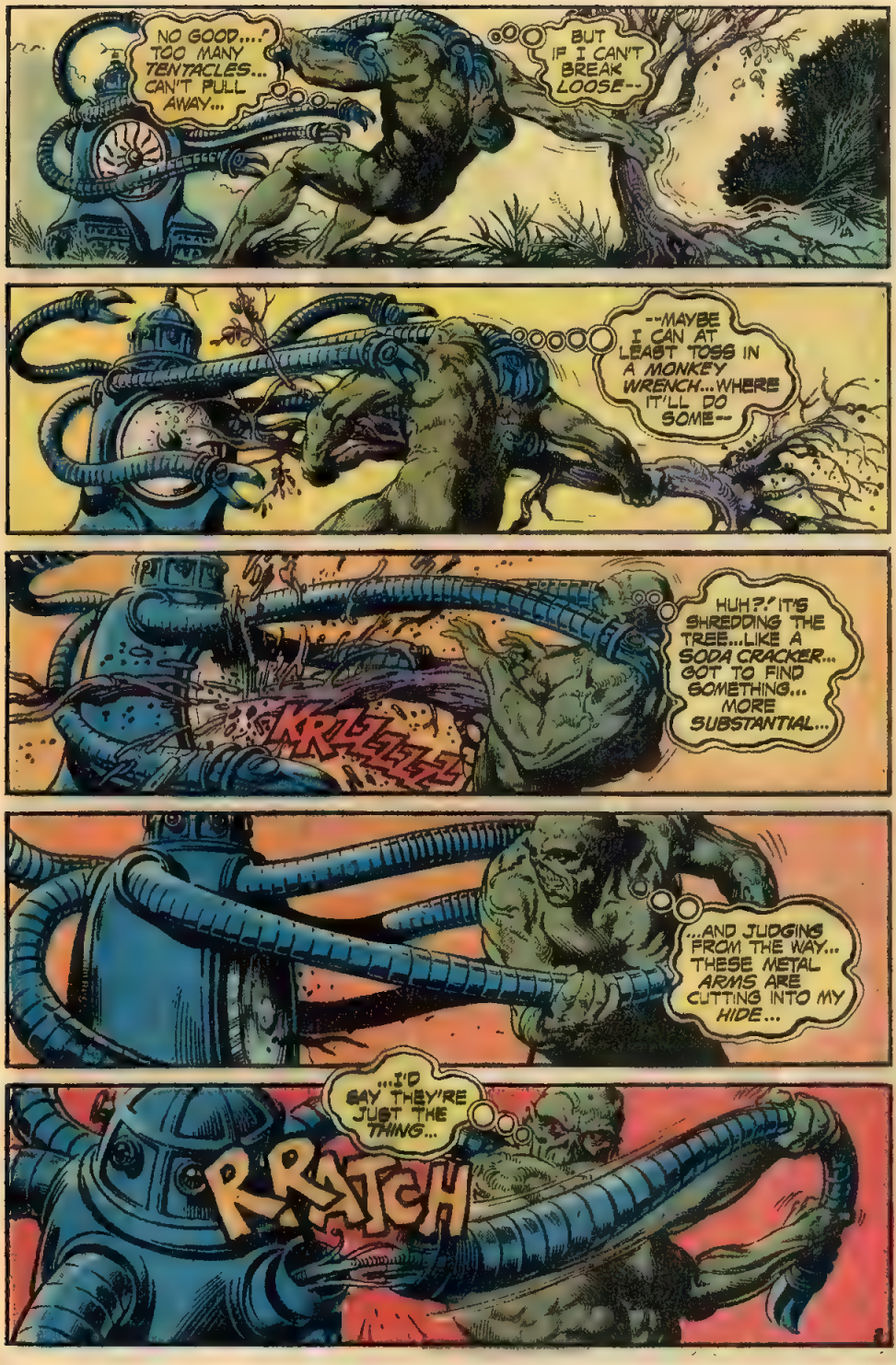

EXIT SANOBEL MISSION: FOLLOW THE WENDING JUNGLE PATHS A SHORT MILE EASTWARD THROUGH TEEMING CARIBBEAN UNDERGROWTH--PART THE DRY-BARKED BRANCHES OF A BANYAN TREE RIMMING A SUN-SLASHED GLADE--
--AND STEP RIGHT INTO THE WELCOMING ARMS--OF A NIGHTMARE.
LORD...! THIS STAINLESS-STEEL MONSTROSITY...JUST POPPED UP OUT OF NOWHERE...! AND SOMETHING TELLS ME...THESE AREN'T JUST HUGS OF AFFECTION...
GOT TO KEEP IT FROM PULLING ME... INTO THOSE SPINNING BLADES... OR IT'S ALL OVER...

THE DESTINY MACHINE

A DAVID MICHELINIE (WRITER) ⁘ NESTOR REDONDO (ILLUSTRATOR) ⁘ JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION


NO GOOD...! TOO MANY TENTACLES... CAN'T PULL AWAY...
BUT IF I CAN'T BREAK LOOSE--
--MAYBE I CAN AT LEAST TOSS IN A MONKEY WRENCH...WHERE IT'LL DO SOME--
KRGLLLLL
HUH?! IT'S SHREDDING THE TREE...LIKE A SODA CRACKER... GOT TO FIND SOMETHING... MORE SUBSTANTIAL...
...AND JUDGING FROM THE WAY... THESE METAL ARMS ARE CUTTING INTO MY HIDE...
...I'D SAY THEY'RE JUST THE THING...
RRATCH

...TO GIVE MY SHINY FRIEND HERE...
SPTANG
KCHING
...INDIGESTION...?
RRRRUMBLE
KWHAPRAVG
=WHEW= A FEW MORE SECONDS OF THAT SQUEEZING... AND I'D HAVE ENDED UP... A PILE OF MOSSY PUTTY...
BUT DESTROYING THAT THING... DOESN'T ANSWER THE QUESTIONS IT BROUGHT UP...
...LIKE WHAT A STAINLESS-STEEL OCTOPUS... IS DOING IN THE MIDDLE OF A JUNGLE... AND WHO MADE IT... AND WHY...
IT MAY SOUND A BIT TRITE... BUT THERE'S SOMETHING VERY ODD GOING ON HERE...
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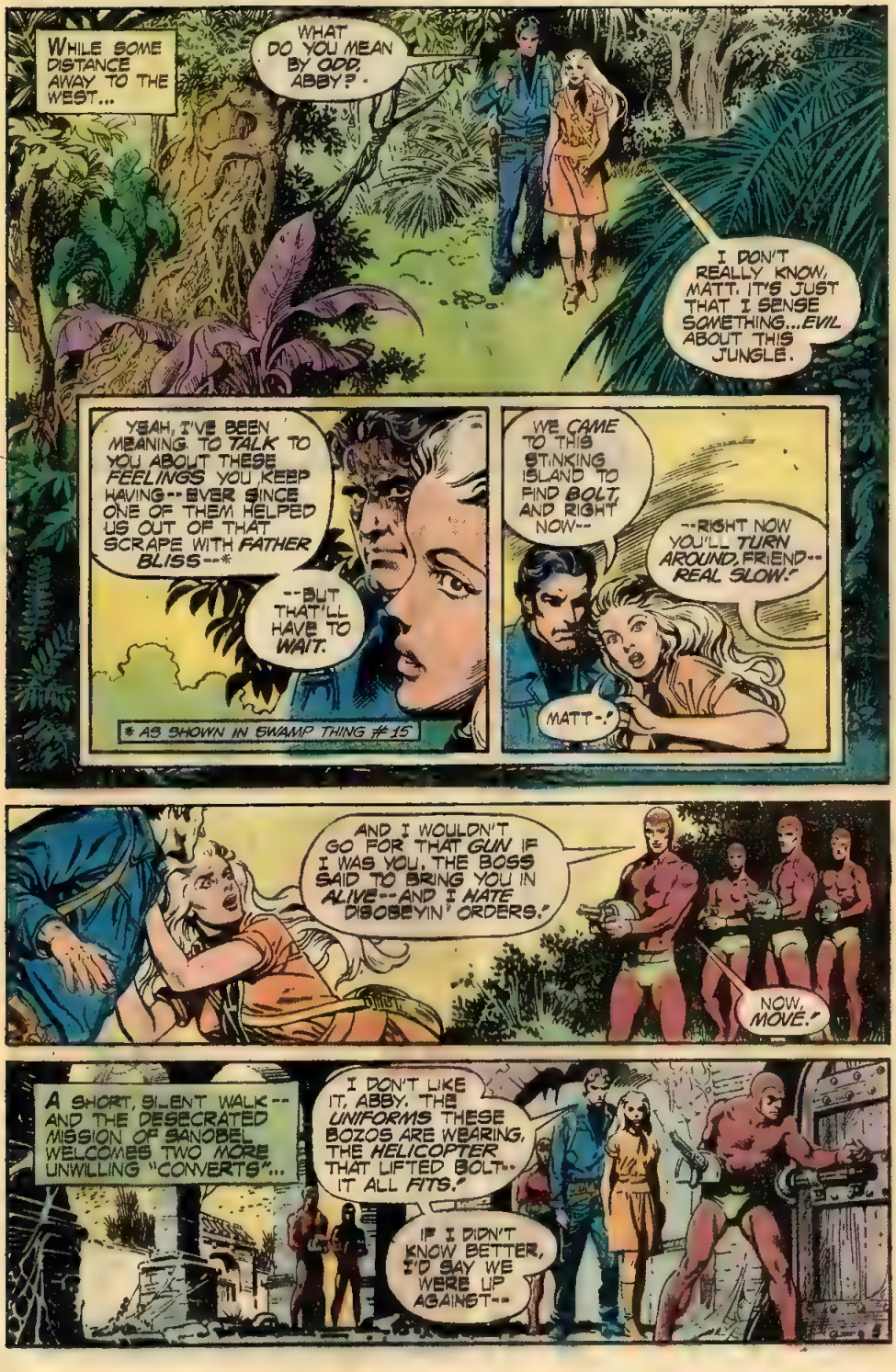
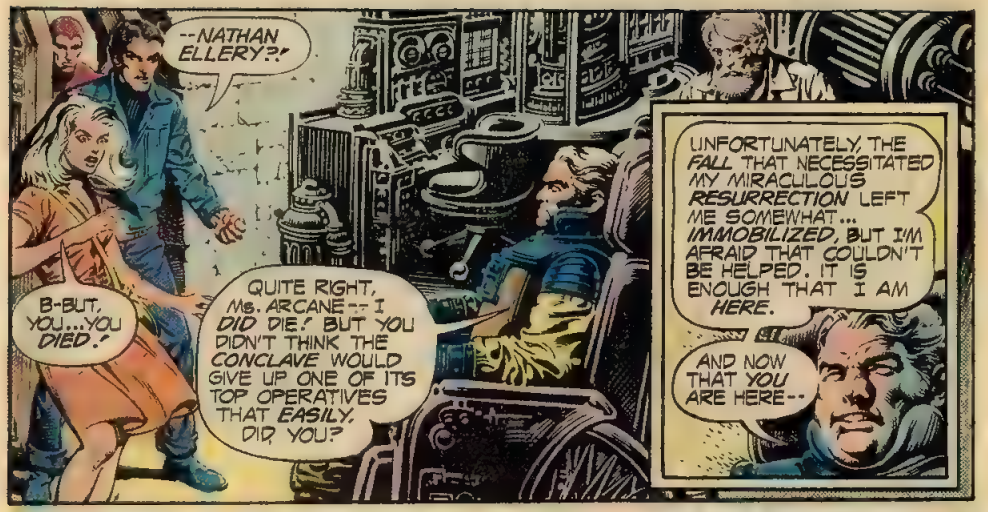
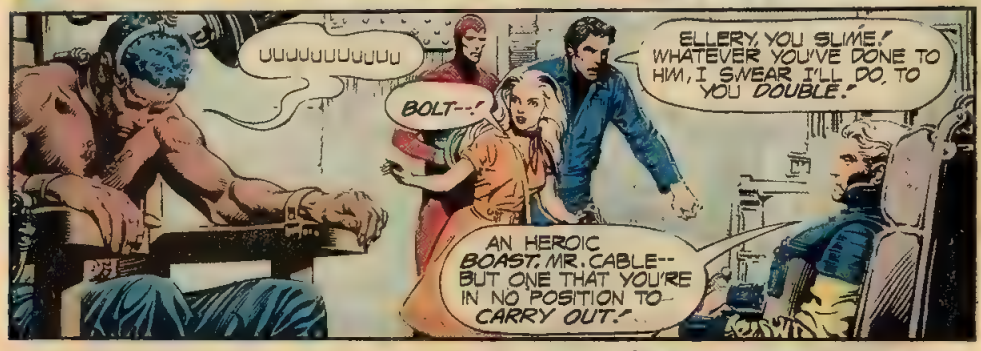
4

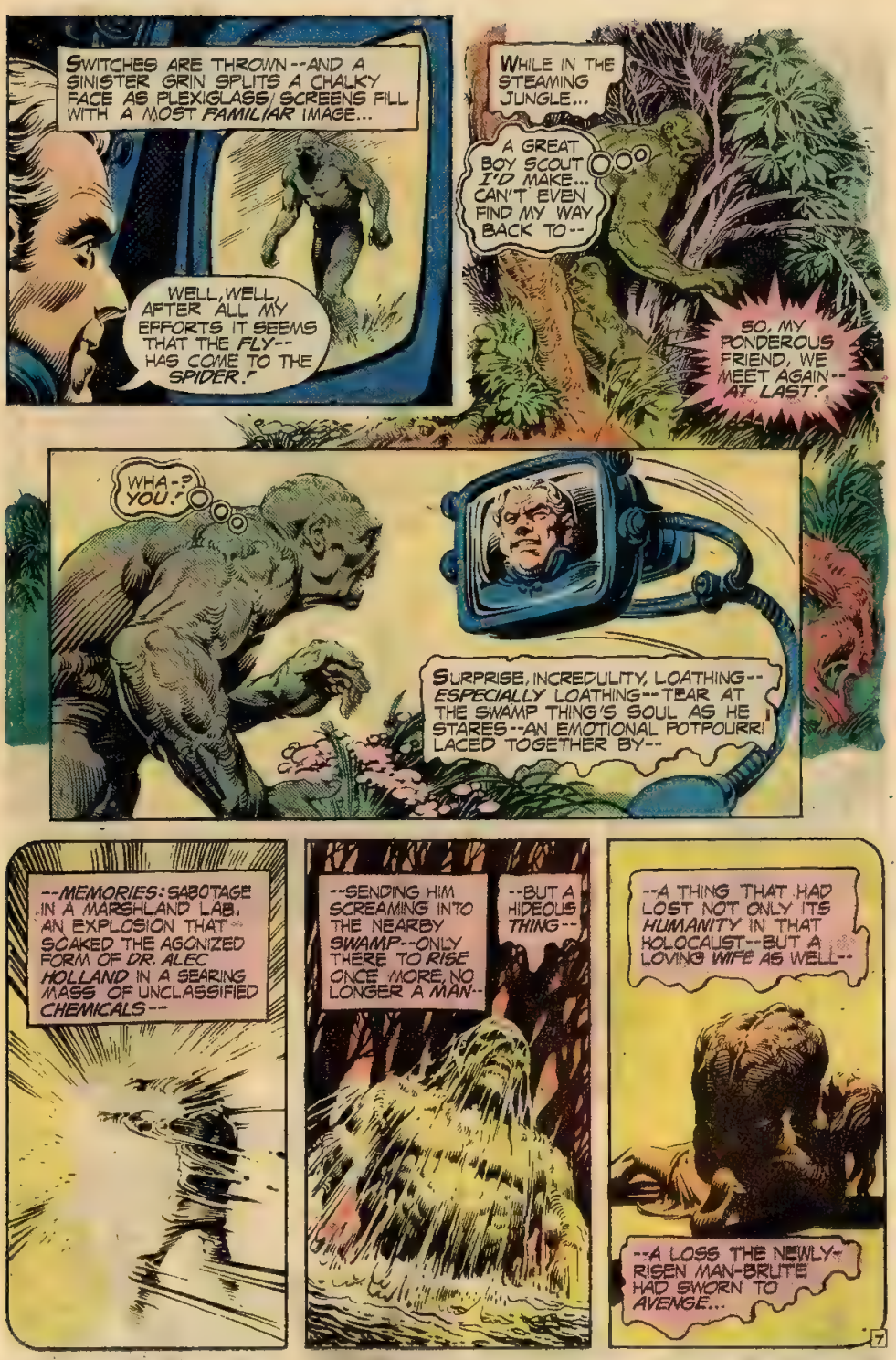

WHILE SOME DISTANCE AWAY TO THE WEST...
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY ODD, ABBY?
I DON'T REALLY KNOW, MATT. IT'S JUST THAT I SENSE SOMETHING...EVIL ABOUT THIS JUNGLE.
YEAH, I'VE BEEN MEANING TO TALK TO YOU ABOUT THESE FEELINGS YOU KEEP HAVING--EVER SINCE ONE OF THEM HELPED US OUT OF THAT SCRAPE WITH FATHER BLISS--*
--BUT THAT'LL HAVE TO WAIT.
* AS SHOWN IN SWAMP THING #15
WE CAME TO THIS STINKING ISLAND TO FIND BOLT, AND RIGHT NOW--
--RIGHT NOW YOU'LL TURN AROUND, FRIEND--REAL SLOW!
MATT-!
AND I WOULDN'T GO FOR THAT GUN IF I WAS YOU. THE BOSS SAID TO BRING YOU IN ALIVE--AND I HATE DISOBEYIN' ORDERS!
NOW, MOVE!
A SHORT, SILENT WALK--AND THE DESECRATED MISSION OF SANOBEL WELCOMES TWO MORE UNWILLING "CONVERTS"...
I DON'T LIKE IT, ABBY. THE UNIFORMS THESE BOZOS ARE WEARING, THE HELICOPTER THAT LIFTED BOLT--IT ALL FITS!
IF I DIDN'T KNOW BETTER, I'D SAY WE WERE UP AGAINST--


--NATHAN ELLERY?!
B-BUT, YOU...YOU DIED!
QUITE RIGHT, Ms. ARCANE--I DID DIE! BUT YOU DIDN'T THINK THE CONCLAVE WOULD GIVE UP ONE OF ITS TOP OPERATIVES THAT EASILY, DID YOU?
UNFORTUNATELY, THE FALL THAT NECESSITATED MY MIRACULOUS RESURRECTION LEFT ME SOMEWHAT... IMMOBILIZED, BUT I'M AFRAID THAT COULDN'T BE HELPED. IT IS ENOUGH THAT I AM HERE.
AND NOW THAT YOU ARE HERE--


UUUUUUUUUU
BOLT--!
ELLERY, YOU SLIME! WHATEVER YOU'VE DONE TO HIM, I SWEAR I'LL DO TO YOU DOUBLE!
AN HEROIC BOAST, MR. CABLE--BUT ONE THAT YOU'RE IN NO POSITION TO CARRY OUT!

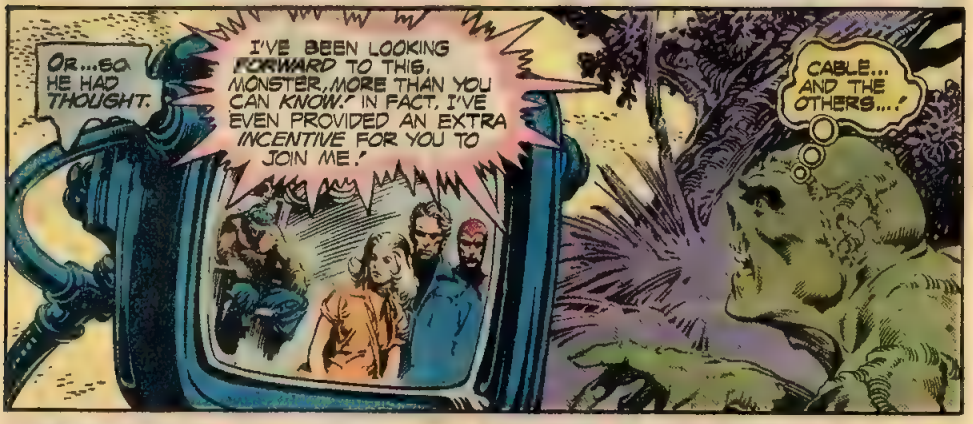
BUT DON'T WORRY ABOUT YOUR STUBBORN FRIEND--I'M THROUGH WITH HIM. YOU ALL POSSESS THE INFORMATION I SEEK AND I'M SURE I CAN GAIN IT MUCH EASIER NOW--FROM Ms. ARCANE.
BOGEN! STRAP HER IN THE--

WHAT? BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! ACTIVATE THE MONITORS--IT MUST BE IN VISUAL RANGE BY NOW!
MR. E.! THAT BLIP ON THE EASTERN PERIMETER--IT'S STILL COMIN'!


SWITCHES ARE THROWN--AND A SINISTER GRIN SPLITS A CHALKY FACE AS PLEXIGLASS SCREENS FILL WITH A MOST FAMILIAR IMAGE...
WELL, WELL, AFTER ALL MY EFFORTS IT SEEMS THAT THE FLY-- HAS COME TO THE SPIDER!
WHILE IN THE STEAMING JUNGLE...
A GREAT BOY SCOUT I'D MAKE... CAN'T EVEN FIND MY WAY BACK TO--
SO, MY PONDEROUS FRIEND, WE MEET AGAIN-- AT LAST!
WHA-? YOU!
SURPRISE, INCREDULITY, LOATHING-- ESPECIALLY LOATHING--TEAR AT THE SWAMP THING'S SOUL AS HE STARES--AN EMOTIONAL POTPOURRI LACED TOGETHER BY--
--MEMORIES: SABOTAGE IN A MARSHLAND LAB. AN EXPLOSION THAT SOAKED THE AGONIZED FORM OF DR. ALEC HOLLAND IN A SEARING MASS OF UNCLASSIFIED CHEMICALS--
--SENDING HIM SCREAMING INTO THE NEARBY SWAMP--ONLY THERE TO RISE ONCE MORE, NO LONGER A MAN--
--BUT A HIDEOUS THING--
--A THING THAT HAD LOST NOT ONLY ITS HUMANITY IN THAT HOLOCAUST--BUT A LOVING WIFE AS WELL--
--A LOSS THE NEWLY-RISEN MAN-BRUTE HAD SWORN TO AVENGE...

THEN MEMORIES SHIFT TO FOLLOW A GLOBE-SPANNING QUEST--A SEARCH ENDING IN CONFRONTATION--
--AND A DECISION NOT TO BECOME THE SAME KIND OF FILTH HE HAD SWORN TO DESTROY--

ONLY FATE HAD INTERVENED IN THE FORM OF AN AWKWARD MISSTEP--
--AND HAD COMPLETED THE STARTLED SWAMP THING'S MISSION FOR HIM...


OR...SO HE HAD THOUGHT.
I'VE BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS, MONSTER, MORE THAN YOU CAN KNOW! IN FACT, I'VE EVEN PROVIDED AN EXTRA INCENTIVE FOR YOU TO JOIN ME!
CABLE... AND THE OTHERS...!

WE AWAIT YOU IN AN OLD MISSION DUE WEST OF YOUR PRESENT POSITION. AND I SUGGEST YOU DON'T TARRY--
--FOR WITH EVERY HOUR YOU DELAY, MR. CABLE OR ONE OF HIS FRIENDS WILL DIE--PAINFULLY!

AND LEST YOUR LITTLE STROLL BECOME TEDIOUS, I'VE PROVIDED CERTAIN... AMUSEMENTS ALONG THE WAY TO MAKE THE JOURNEY A BIT MORE, SHALL WE SAY--
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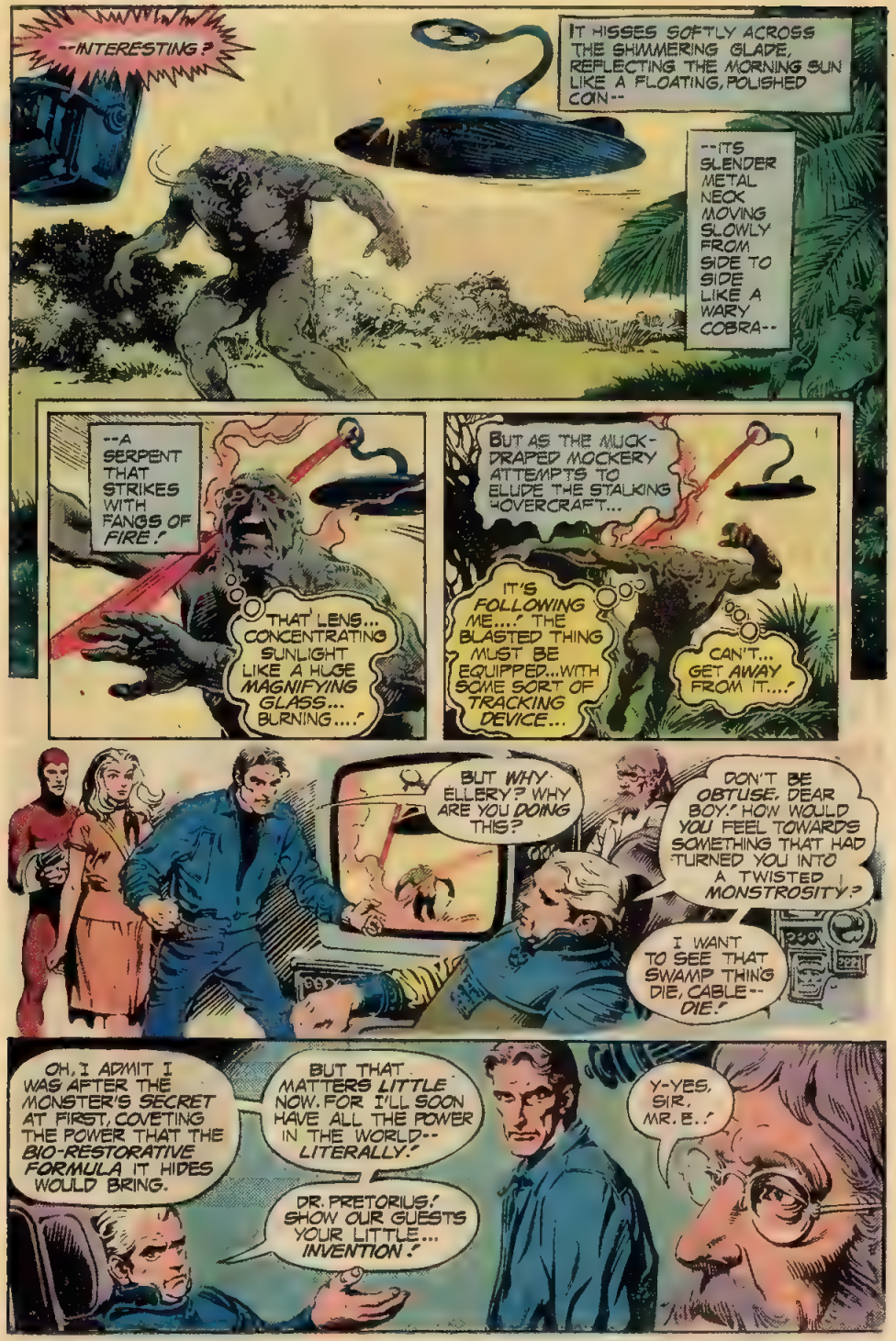
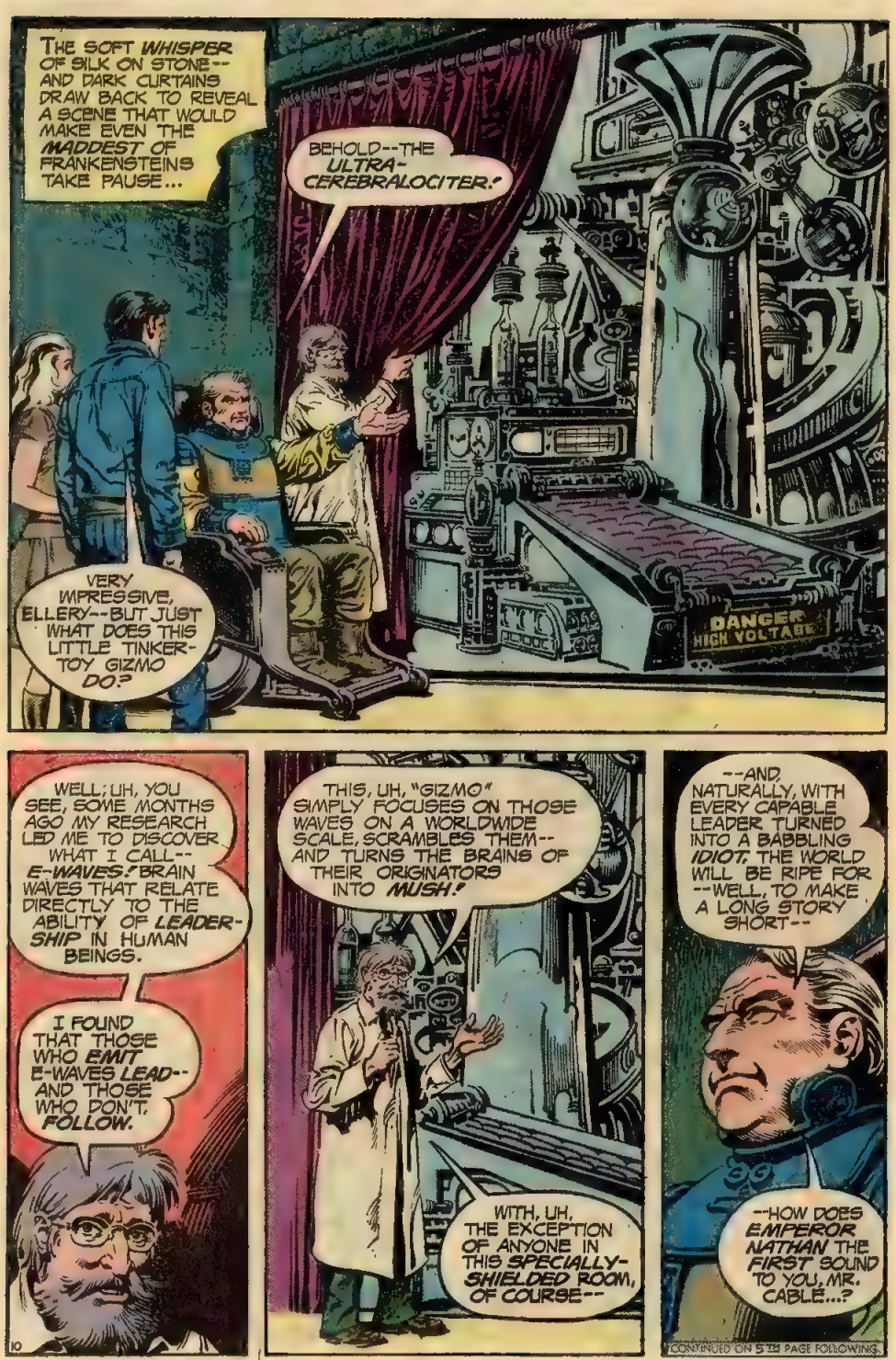

--INTERESTING?
IT HISSES SOFTLY ACROSS THE SHIMMERING GLADE, REFLECTING THE MORNING SUN LIKE A FLOATING, POLISHED COIN--
--ITS SLENDER METAL NECK MOVING SLOWLY FROM SIDE TO SIDE LIKE A WARY COBRA--
--A SERPENT THAT STRIKES WITH FANGS OF FIRE!
THAT LENS... CONCENTRATING SUNLIGHT LIKE A HUGE MAGNIFYING GLASS... BURNING...!
BUT AS THE MUCK-DRAPED MOCKERY ATTEMPTS TO ELUDE THE STALKING HOVERCRAFT...
IT'S FOLLOWING ME...! THE BLASTED THING MUST BE EQUIPPED...WITH SOME SORT OF TRACKING DEVICE...
CAN'T... GET AWAY FROM IT...!
BUT WHY ELLERY? WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
DON'T BE OBTUSE, DEAR BOY! HOW WOULD YOU FEEL TOWARDS SOMETHING THAT HAD TURNED YOU INTO A TWISTED MONSTROSITY?
I WANT TO SEE THAT SWAMP THING DIE, CABLE-- DIE!
OH, I ADMIT I WAS AFTER THE MONSTER'S SECRET AT FIRST, COVETING THE POWER THAT THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA IT HIDES WOULD BRING.
BUT THAT MATTERS LITTLE NOW. FOR I'LL SOON HAVE ALL THE POWER IN THE WORLD-- LITERALLY!
DR. PRETORIUS! SHOW OUR GUESTS YOUR LITTLE... INVENTION!
Y-YES, SIR, MR. E.!


THE SOFT WHISPER OF SILK ON STONE--AND DARK CURTAINS DRAW BACK TO REVEAL A SCENE THAT WOULD MAKE EVEN THE MADDEST OF FRANKENSTEINS TAKE PAUSE...
BEHOLD--THE ULTRA-CEREBRALOCITER!
VERY IMPRESSIVE, ELLERY--BUT JUST WHAT DOES THIS LITTLE TINKER-TOY GIZMO DO?
DANGER HIGH VOLTAGE
WELL; UH, YOU SEE, SOME MONTHS AGO MY RESEARCH LED ME TO DISCOVER WHAT I CALL--E-WAVES! BRAIN WAVES THAT RELATE DIRECTLY TO THE ABILITY OF LEADER-SHIP IN HUMAN BEINGS.
I FOUND THAT THOSE WHO EMIT E-WAVES LEAD--AND THOSE WHO DON'T, FOLLOW.
10
THIS, UH, "GIZMO" SIMPLY FOCUSES ON THOSE WAVES ON A WORLDWIDE SCALE, SCRAMBLES THEM--AND TURNS THE BRAINS OF THEIR ORIGINATORS INTO MUSH!
WITH, UH, THE EXCEPTION OF ANYONE IN THIS SPECIALLY-SHIELDED ROOM, OF COURSE--
--AND, NATURALLY, WITH EVERY CAPABLE LEADER TURNED INTO A BABBLING IDIOT, THE WORLD WILL BE RIPE FOR--WELL, TO MAKE A LONG STORY SHORT--
--HOW DOES EMPEROR NATHAN THE FIRST SOUND TO YOU, MR. CABLE...?
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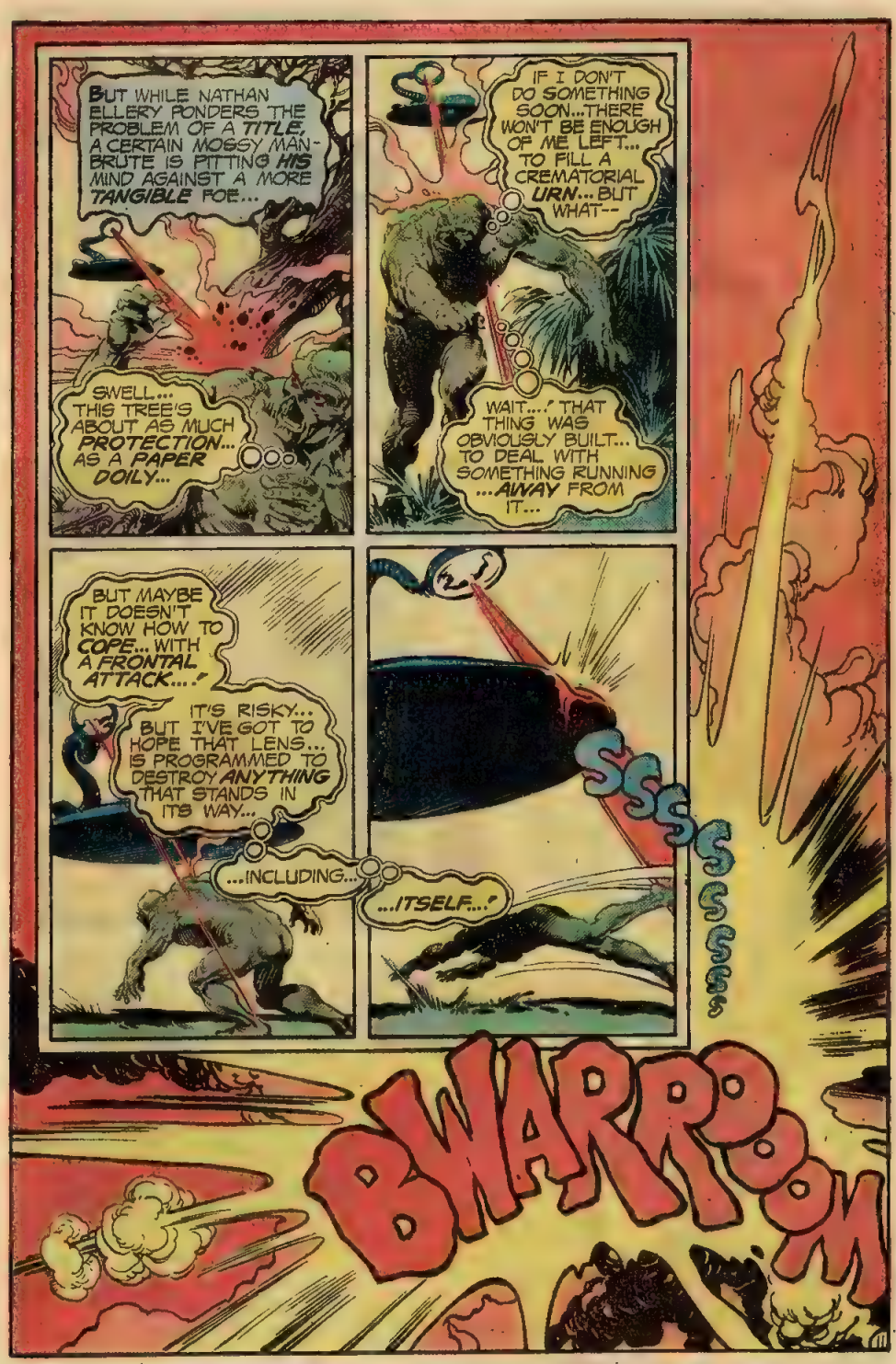
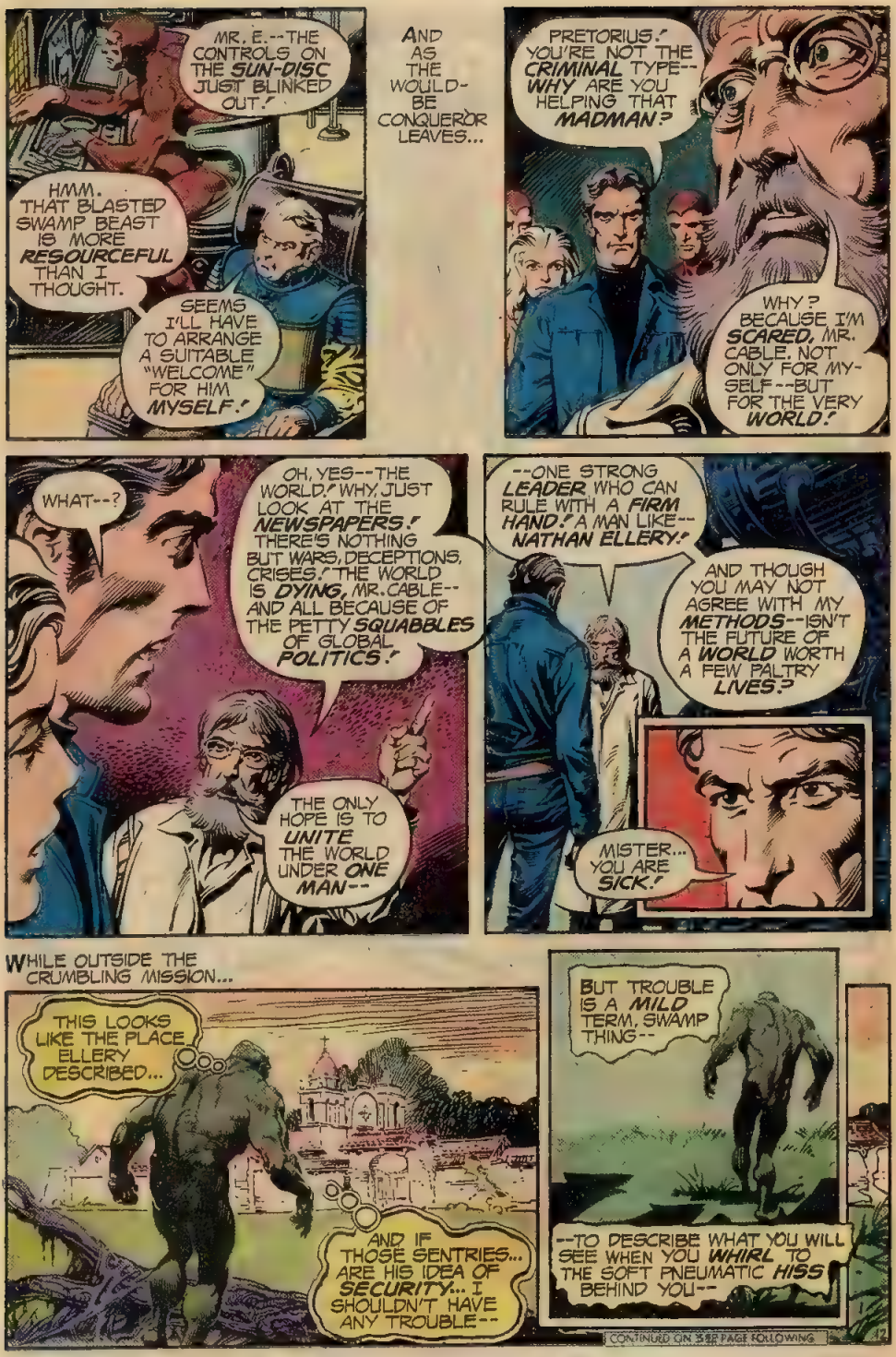
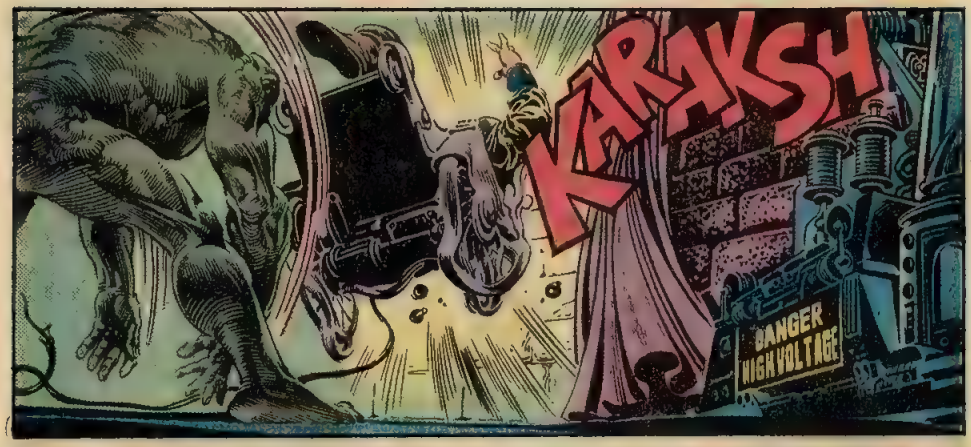

BUT WHILE NATHAN ELLERY PONDERS THE PROBLEM OF A TITLE, A CERTAIN MOSSY MAN-BRUTE IS PITTING HIS MIND AGAINST A MORE TANGIBLE FOE...
SWELL... THIS TREE'S ABOUT AS MUCH PROTECTION... AS A PAPER DOILY...
IF I DON'T DO SOMETHING SOON...THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH OF ME LEFT... TO FILL A CREMATORIAL URN... BUT WHAT--
WAIT...! THAT THING WAS OBVIOUSLY BUILT... TO DEAL WITH SOMETHING RUNNING ...AWAY FROM IT...
BUT MAYBE IT DOESN'T KNOW HOW TO COPE... WITH A FRONTAL ATTACK...!
IT'S RISKY... BUT I'VE GOT TO HOPE THAT LENS... IS PROGRAMMED TO DESTROY ANYTHING THAT STANDS IN ITS WAY...
...INCLUDING...
...ITSELF...!
SSSSSSSS
BWARROOM


MR. E.--THE CONTROLS ON THE SUN-DISC JUST BLINKED OUT!
HMM. THAT BLASTED SWAMP BEAST IS MORE RESOURCEFUL THAN I THOUGHT.
SEEMS I'LL HAVE TO ARRANGE A SUITABLE "WELCOME" FOR HIM MYSELF!
AND AS THE WOULD-BE CONQUEROR LEAVES...
PRETORIUS! YOU'RE NOT THE CRIMINAL TYPE--WHY ARE YOU HELPING THAT MADMAN?
WHY? BECAUSE I'M SCARED, MR. CABLE. NOT ONLY FOR MYSELF--BUT FOR THE VERY WORLD!
WHAT--?
OH, YES--THE WORLD! WHY, JUST LOOK AT THE NEWSPAPERS! THERE'S NOTHING BUT WARS, DECEPTIONS, CRISES! THE WORLD IS DYING, MR. CABLE--AND ALL BECAUSE OF THE PETTY SQUABBLES OF GLOBAL POLITICS!
THE ONLY HOPE IS TO UNITE THE WORLD UNDER ONE MAN--
--ONE STRONG LEADER WHO CAN RULE WITH A FIRM HAND! A MAN LIKE--NATHAN ELLERY!
AND THOUGH YOU MAY NOT AGREE WITH MY METHODS--ISN'T THE FUTURE OF A WORLD WORTH A FEW PALTRY LIVES?
MISTER... YOU ARE SICK!
WHILE OUTSIDE THE CRUMBLING MISSION...
THIS LOOKS LIKE THE PLACE ELLERY DESCRIBED...
AND IF THOSE SENTRIES... ARE HIS IDEA OF SECURITY... I SHOULDN'T HAVE ANY TROUBLE--
BUT TROUBLE IS A MILD TERM, SWAMP THING--
--TO DESCRIBE WHAT YOU WILL SEE WHEN YOU WHIRL TO THE SOFT PNEUMATIC HISS BEHIND YOU--
CONTINUED ON SEE PAGE FOLLOWING

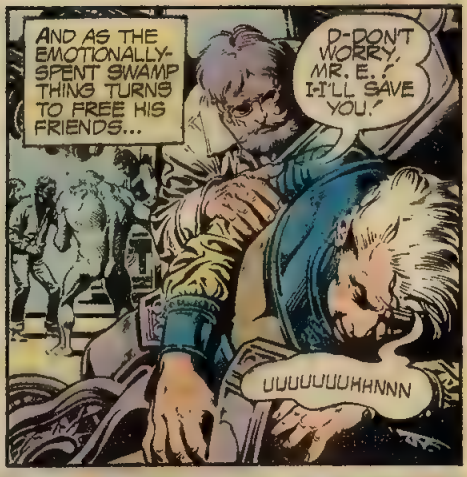
--AND FIND YOURSELF FACE TO FACE WITH AN IMPOSSIBLE, STEELY-GLINTING VISION--
--OF HELL...
ROBOT WOLVES...! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN ELLERY WOULD HAVE SOMETHING ELSE UP HIS SLEEVE...."
THEY ATTACK SWIFTLY, THE FETID STENCH OF OZONE MINGLING IN THE HOLLOW RASP OF FERAL, METALLIC SNARLS--
--A RIPPING, SHREDDING HORROR THAT WOULD LEAVE A MAN FLESHLESS IN MERE SECONDS...

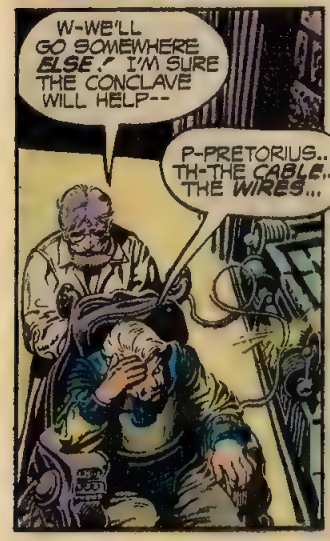
ONLY THIS FOE IS MORE THAN A MAN--
--MUCH MORE...
THEY'RE STRONG... BUT SO AM I...
AND I'VE A HUNCH THAT... IF ENOUGH PRESSURE IS APPLIED... EVEN A STEEL SPINE WILL--
KRAK
THEY JUST KEEP COMING... BUT I CAN'T WASTE TIME... GOT TO GET INSIDE THAT MISSION...
MY FRIENDS ARE BEHIND THOSE WALLS...
...AND NOT HELL, HIGH WATER--
--OR THE WHOLE BLASTED CONCLAVE IS GOING TO... STOP ME FROM REACHING THEM...!
OPEN FIRE! THE WOLVES AREN'T STOPPIN' HIM!
BUT...
HOLY CRUD! MAGNUM SHELLS DON'T EVEN SLOW 'IM DOWN!
THE BLOODY MONSTER'S AT THE GATE!
CORRECTION, BUCKO...
...HE'S THROUGH THE GATE...!
KAWRAMM

TERROR PAINTS THE COURTYARD A FRESH BLOOD-RED, AS MECHANIZED DEMONS QUIT A MOSS-CAKED FORM FOR FAR EASIER PREY--
--WASHING THE SCENE WITH CONFUSION, CHAOS--
--AND AN INESCAPABLE REALIZATION...
BLAST THAT MONSTER! IT SEEMS I'VE UNDERESTIMATED HIS TENACITY!
A MISTAKE THAT COULD PROVE FATAL IF I LINGER HERE!
AND SINCE I'VE NO DESIRE TO DIE A SECOND TI--
ELLERY!
WHA-?
N-NO! STOP! Y-YOU DON'T UNDER-- :UNF:
STEP ASIDE, LITTLE MAN... MY QUARREL ISN'T... WITH YOU...
WAIT! Y-YOU CAN'T--!
CAN'T I...? YOU MURDERED MY WIFE, ELLERY... AND TURNED ME INTO THIS THING...
...AND GOD KNOWS WHAT YOU'VE DONE... TO THESE PEOPLE...
NO... I TURNED AWAY ONE TIME, FAT MAN... AND MY FRIENDS HERE HAVE PAID FOR THAT COMPASSION...
...IN PAIN...
NOW... IT'S YOUR TURN...!
NOOOOOO

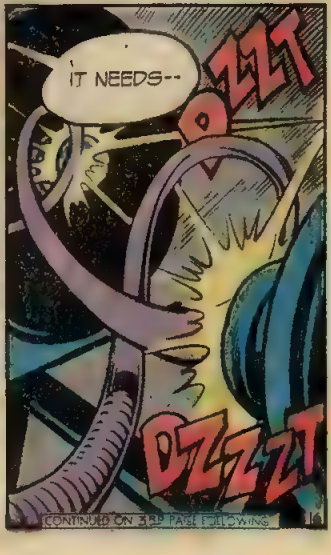

KARAKSH
DANGER
HIGH VOLTAGE

MY GOD! MY GOD, WHAT HAVE YOU DONE?
WHAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN DONE...LONG AGO...


AND AS THE EMOTIONALLY-SPENT SWAMP THING TURNS TO FREE HIS FRIENDS...
D-DON'T WORRY, MR. E.! I-I'LL SAVE YOU!
UUUUUUUHHNNN


W-WE'LL GO SOMEWHERE ELSE! I'M SURE THE CONCLAVE WILL HELP--
P-PRETORIUS... TH-THE CABLE... THE WIRES...

NO TIME TO FIX THEM NOW, SIR! I-I HAVE TO GET YOU TO SAFETY!
THE WORLD NEEDS YOU, MR. E.!
DANGER


IT NEEDS--
OZZT
OZZZZT
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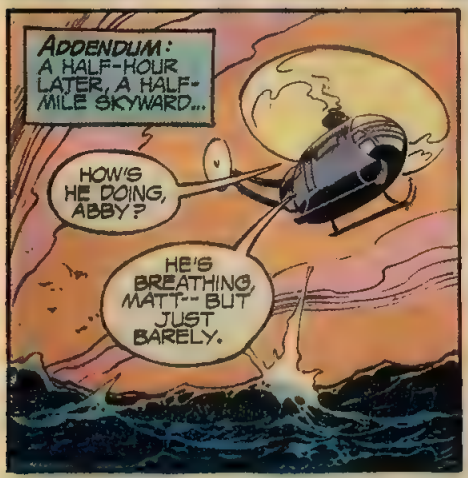
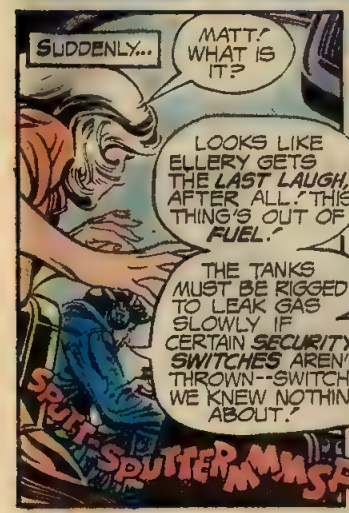
THE SUDDEN FLASH OF ELECTRON FIRE ETCHES THE ROOM WITH HARSH SHADOWS--FILLING THE MISSION LAB WITH THE FURY OF ENERGY UNBOUND--
--AS WELL AS THE ACRID STENCH OF CHARRING FLESH...
KZZZZZHZZZZH
THEN SLOWLY, THE CRISP CRACKLE OF ELECTRICITY FADES, LEAVING THE ROOM IN A PALL OF STUNNED SILENCE--
--UNTIL AT LAST...
ALEC, GIVE ME A HAND!
WE'VE GOT TO GET BOLT TO THAT HELICOPTER BEFORE ELLERY'S LACKEYS COME BACK!
WHAT-? B-BUT, YOU CAN'T LEAVE NOW! WH-WHAT ABOUT MR. E.?
HE'S BURNT TOAST, PRETORIUS! NOW GET OUT OF THE WAY!
B-BUT, THINK OF THE WORLD! WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO MY MACHINE NOW? A-AND MY PLAN? AND--
--AND ME...?
PORTRAIT OF A LITTLE MAN: AN UNSTABLE EGO HELD TOGETHER BY THE STRING OF CONTEMPORARY PARANOIA--
--THE TOO-REAL DREAD OF LIVING IN A WORLD SEEMINGLY BEYOND THE REACH OF HUMAN UNDERSTANDING--
7

--A SITUATION THE DIFFIDENT DR. PRETORIUS WILL SOON HAVE NO REASON TO FEAR...


ADDENDUM: A HALF-HOUR LATER, A HALF-MILE SKYWARD...
HOW'S HE DOING, ABBY?
HE'S BREATHING, MATT-- BUT JUST BARELY.

WELL, I'M PUSHING THIS THING AS FAST AS IT'LL GO--AND I'VE RADIOED AHEAD TO MIAMI INTERNATIONAL FOR AN AMBULANCE.
THE ONLY THING TO WORRY ABOUT NOW IS--


SUDDENLY...
MATT! WHAT IS IT?
LOOKS LIKE ELLERY GETS THE LAST LAUGH, AFTER ALL! THIS THING'S OUT OF FUEL!
THE TANKS MUST BE RIGGED TO LEAK GAS SLOWLY IF CERTAIN SECURITY SWITCHES AREN'T THROWN--SWITCHES WE KNEW NOTHING ABOUT!
SPUTT-SPUTTER MMMSPUTT

BUT... WHAT CAN WE DO?
THERE'S NOT A DAMN THING WE CAN DO, ABBY! JUST STRAP YOURSELF IN AND PRAY! BECAUSE--

--WE'RE GOING DOWN!

NEXT ISSUE:
VILLAGE OF THE DOOMED
NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN JUNE

SWAMP THING
THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
in "THE VILLAGE OF THE DOOMED!"
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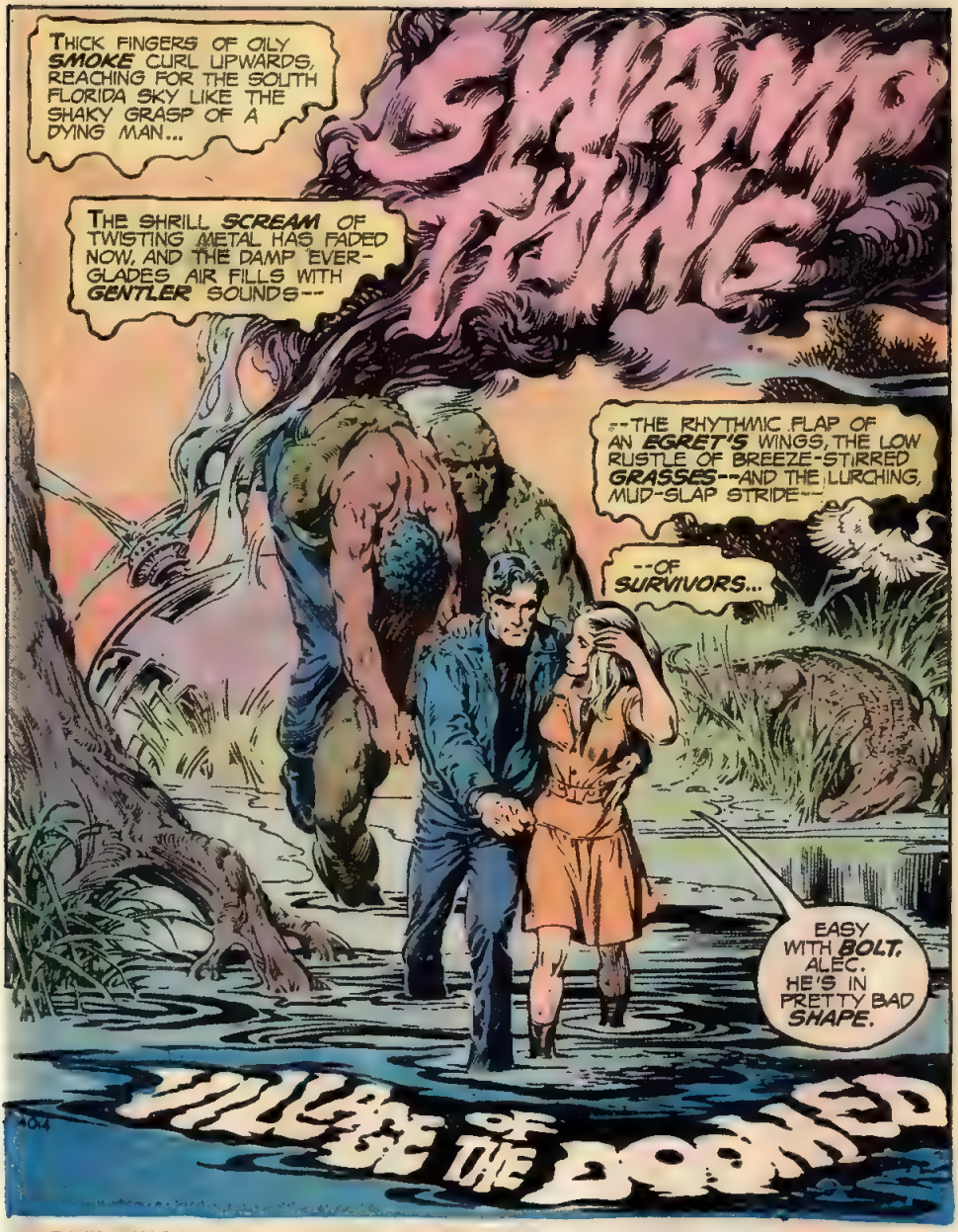
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SWAMP THING


THICK FINGERS OF OILY SMOKE CURL UPWARDS, REACHING FOR THE SOUTH FLORIDA SKY LIKE THE SHAKY GRASP OF A DYING MAN...
SWAMP THING
THE SHRILL SCREAM OF TWISTING METAL HAS FADED NOW, AND THE DAMP EVER-GLADES AIR FILLS WITH GENTLER SOUNDS--
--THE RHYTHMIC FLAP OF AN EGRET'S WINGS, THE LOW RUSTLE OF BREEZE-STIRRED GRASSES--AND THE LURCHING, MUD-SLAP STRIDE--
--OF SURVIVORS...
EASY WITH BOLT, ALEC. HE'S IN PRETTY BAD SHAPE.
VILLAGE OF THE DOOMED

A DAVID MICHELINIE (WRITER) - NESTOR REDONDO (ILLUSTRATOR) - JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION

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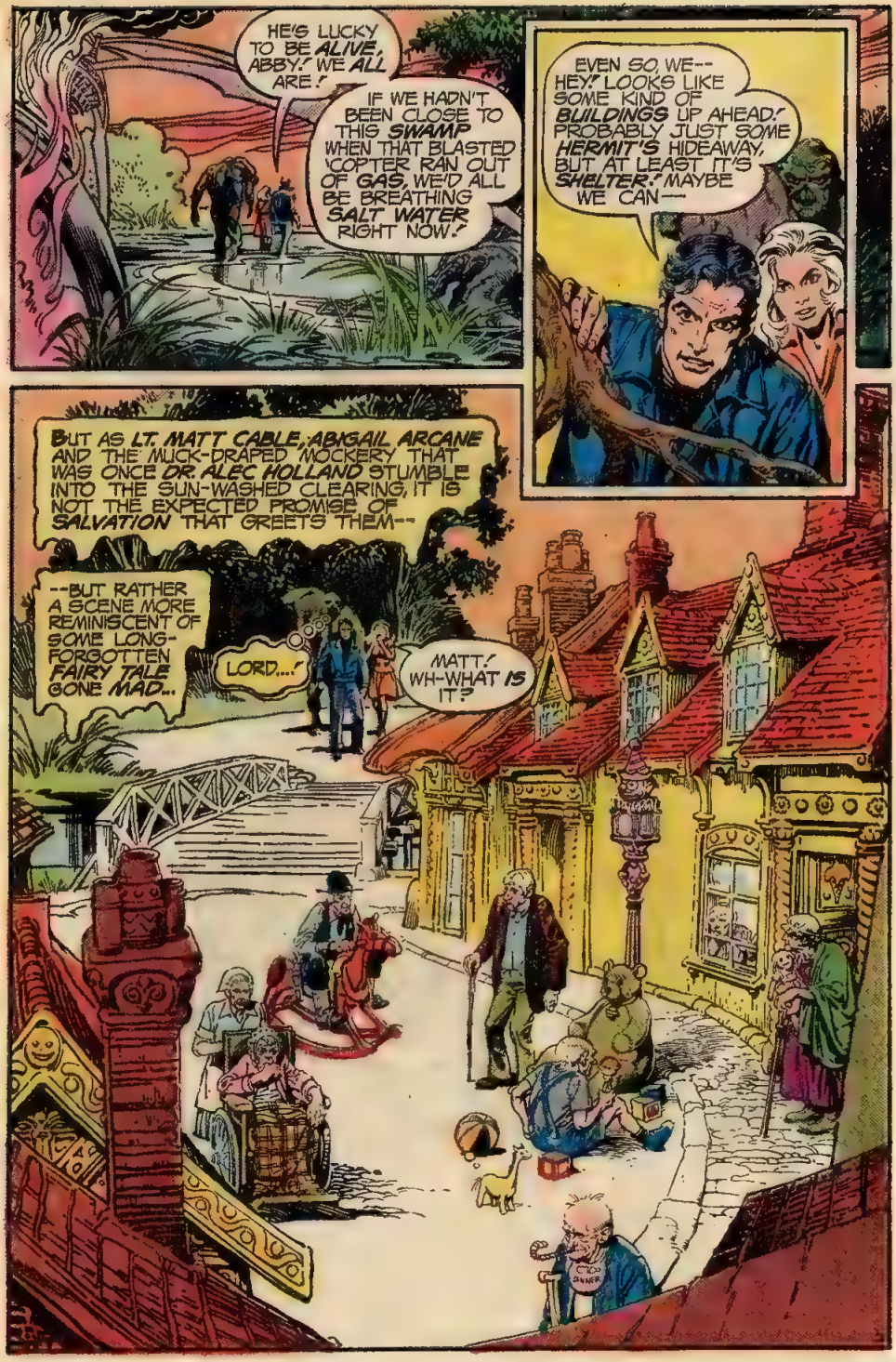
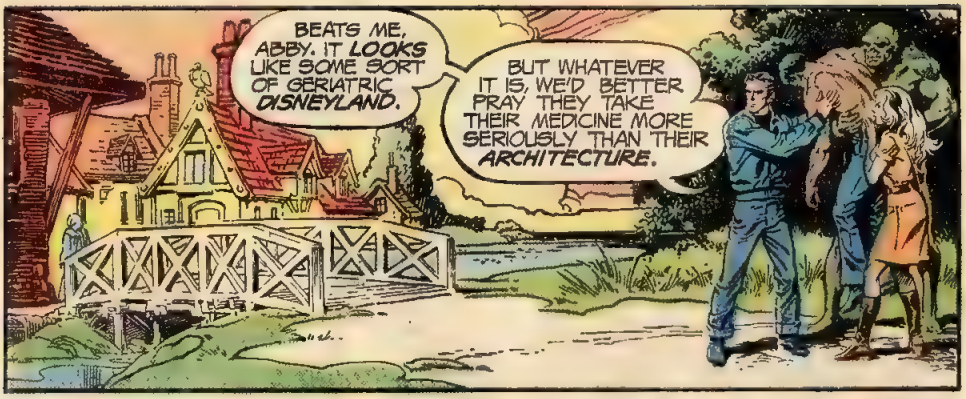
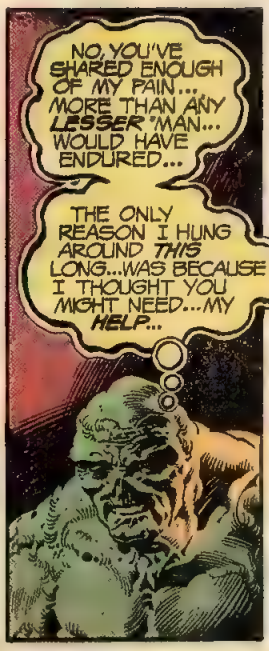

HE'S LUCKY TO BE ALIVE, ABBY! WE ALL ARE!
IF WE HADN'T BEEN CLOSE TO THIS SWAMP WHEN THAT BLASTED 'COPTER RAN OUT OF GAS, WE'D ALL BE BREATHING SALT WATER RIGHT NOW!
EVEN SO, WE-- HEY! LOOKS LIKE SOME KIND OF BUILDINGS UP AHEAD! PROBABLY JUST SOME HERMIT'S HIDEAWAY, BUT AT LEAST IT'S SHELTER! MAYBE WE CAN--
BUT AS LT. MATT CABLE, ABIGAIL ARCANE AND THE MUCK-DRAPED MOCKERY THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND STUMBLE INTO THE SUN-WASHED CLEARING, IT IS NOT THE EXPECTED PROMISE OF SALVATION THAT GREETS THEM--
--BUT RATHER A SCENE MORE REMINISCENT OF SOME LONG-FORGOTTEN FAIRY TALE GONE MAD..
LORD...!
MATT! WH-WHAT IS IT?


BEATS ME, ABBY. IT LOOKS LIKE SOME SORT OF GERIATRIC DISNEYLAND.
BUT WHATEVER IT IS, WE'D BETTER PRAY THEY TAKE THEIR MEDICINE MORE SERIOUSLY THAN THEIR ARCHITECTURE.

YOU WAIT HERE AND KEEP OUT OF SIGHT, ALEC. SOON AS WE MAKE SURE BOLT'S GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT, WE'LL BE BACK.
YOU CAN COME BACK IF YOU WANT, MATT... BUT I'M AFRAID... YOU WON'T FIND ME WAITING...

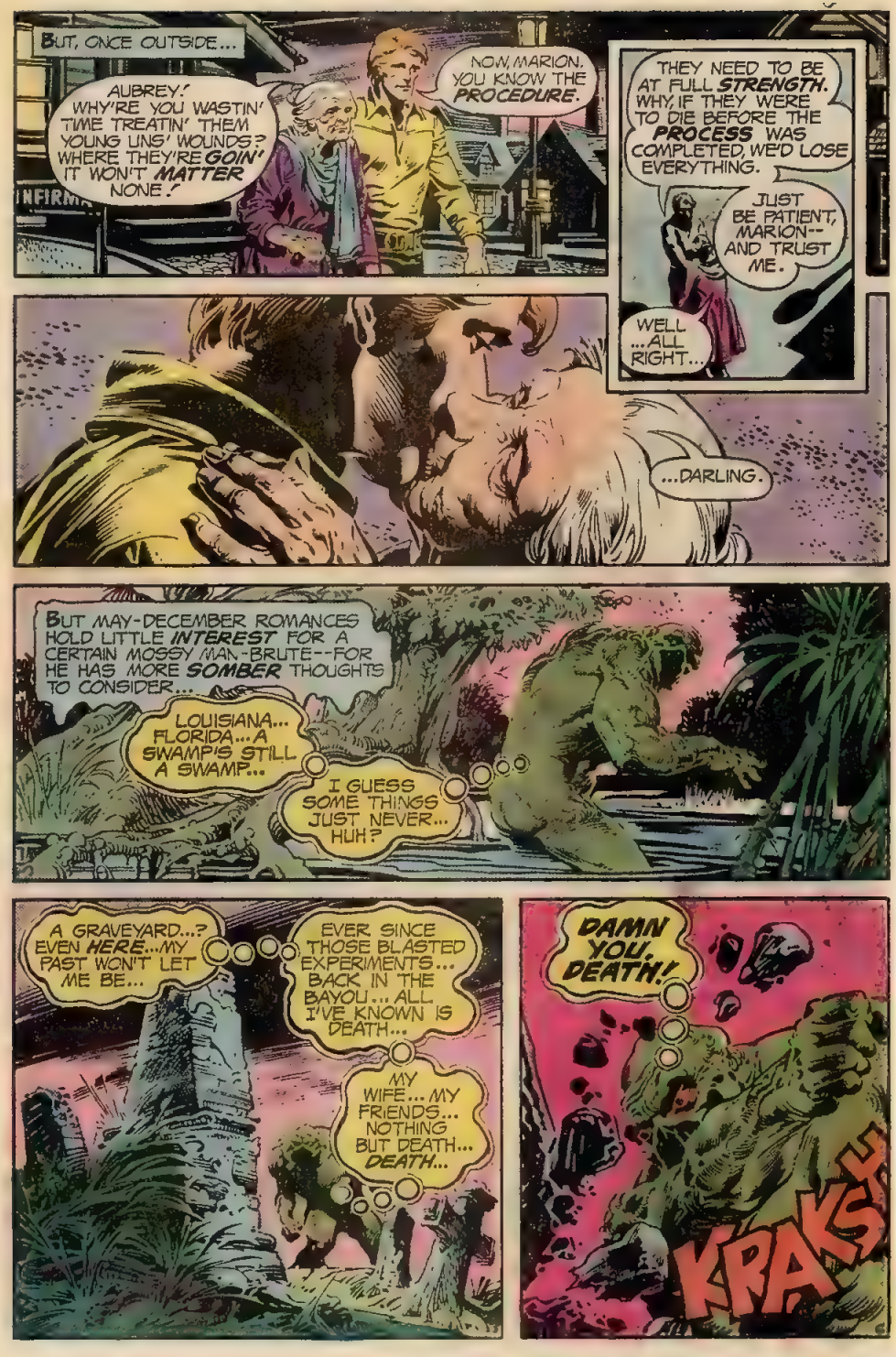

NO, YOU'VE SHARED ENOUGH OF MY PAIN... MORE THAN ANY LESSER MAN... WOULD HAVE ENDURED...
THE ONLY REASON I HUNG AROUND THIS LONG...WAS BECAUSE I THOUGHT YOU MIGHT NEED...MY HELP...

BUT NOW... SINCE YOU'RE IN GOOD HANDS...
"GOOD HANDS", SWAMP THING? PERHAPS HAD YOU DELAYED YOUR SHAMBLING DEPARTURE A FEW SECONDS LONGER--

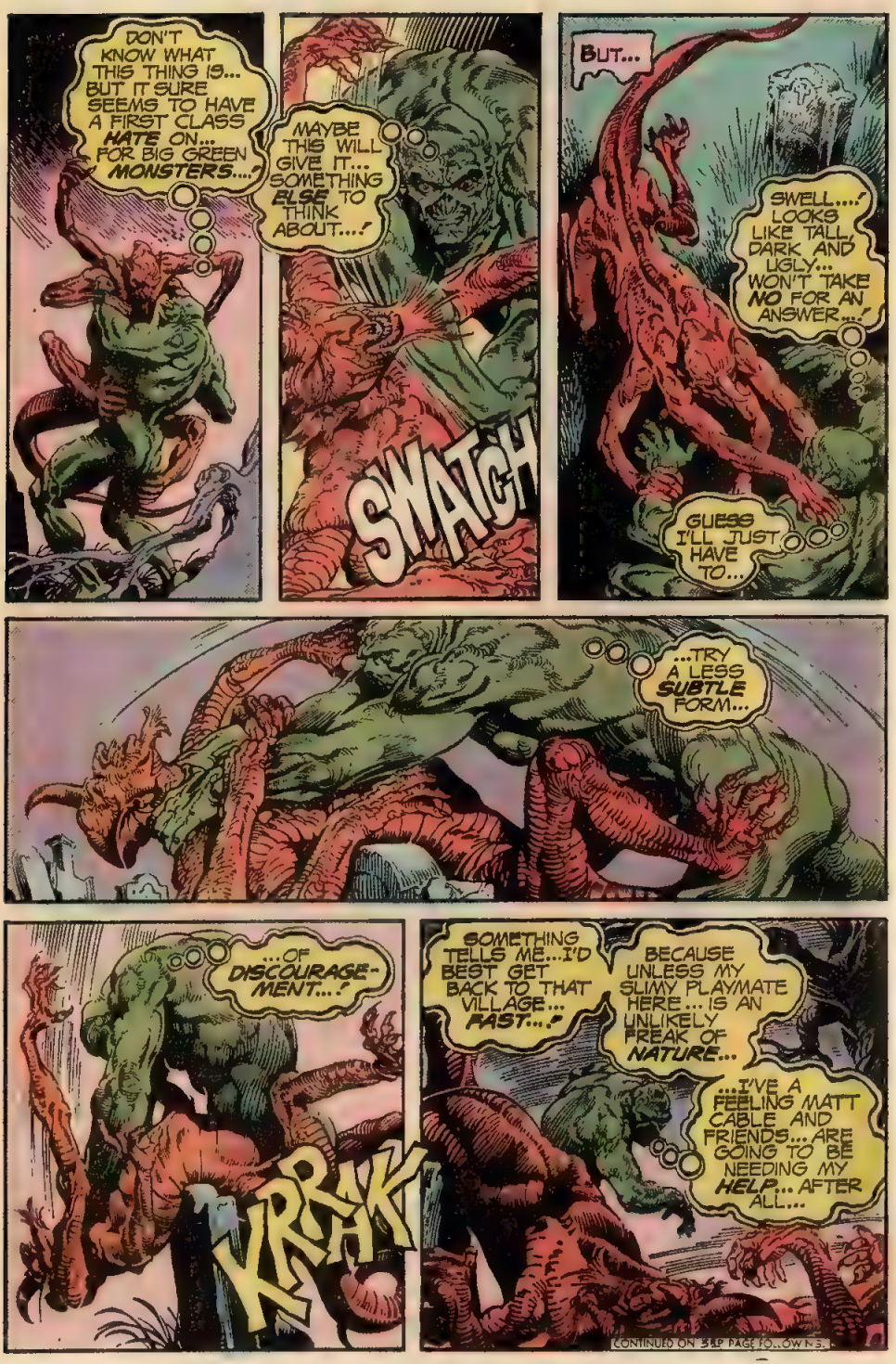
--YOU MIGHT HAVE FOUND CAUSE TO RE-EVALUATE THAT JUDGMENT...
MATT, I DON'T LIKE IT. WHY ARE THEY JUST...STARING AT US?
I DON'T KNOW, ABBY--BUT I INTEND TO FIND OUT.

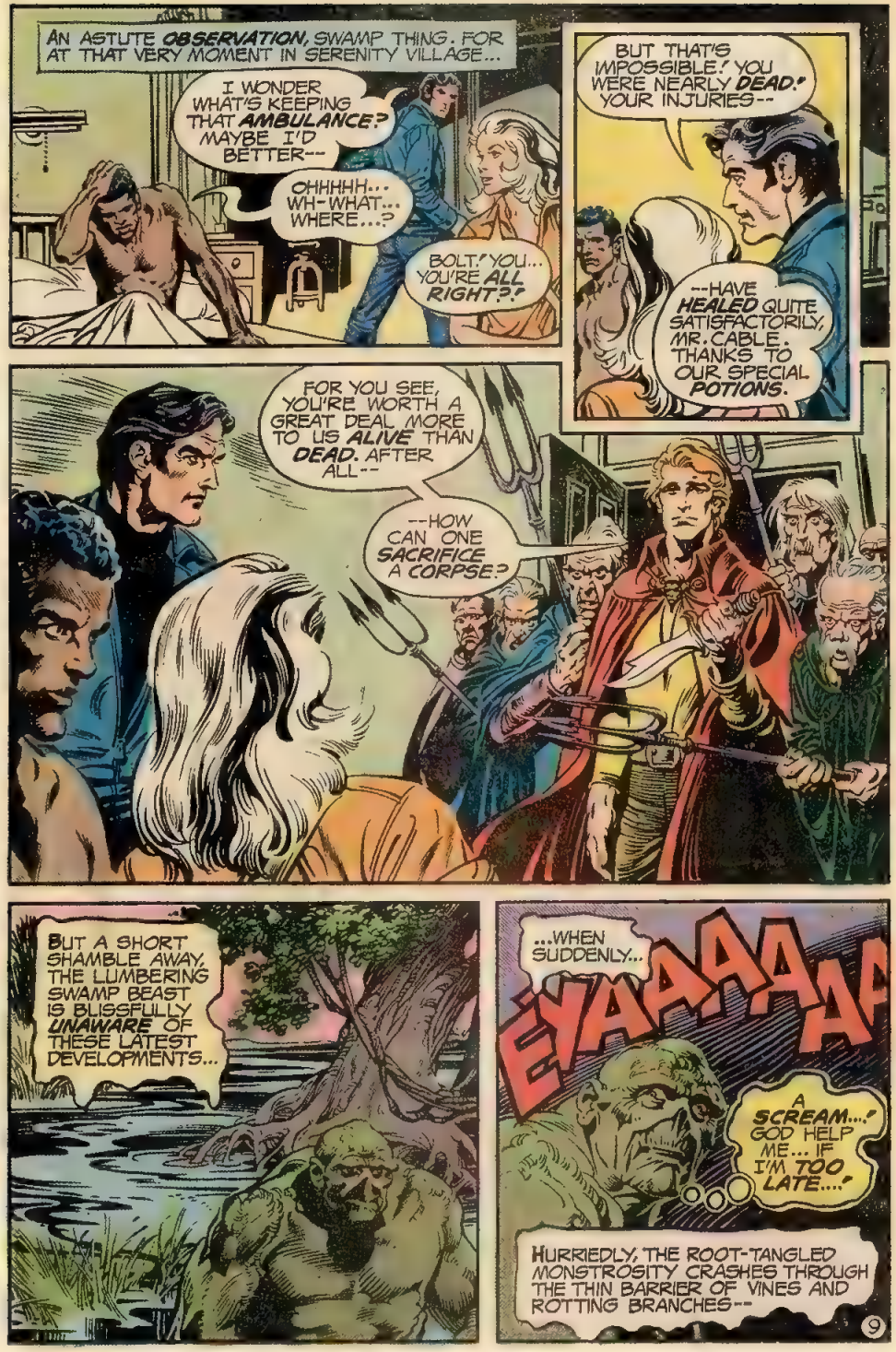
HEY, WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU PEOPLE? CAN'T YOU SEE WE'VE GOT AN INJURED MAN HERE?
WE NEED SOME HELP!
BUT IN ANSWER, THERE IS ONLY SILENCE ALONG THE STORY-BOOK STREET. AND THEN, SLOW SMILES CRACKING THEIR FACES LIKE OPEN WOUNDS, THE AGED CROWD BEGINS TO SHUFFLE FORWARD--
--THEIR FILMY EYES HINTING AT EMOTIONS FAR DARKER THAN MERCY...
OH, MY GOD, MATT! TH-THEY LOOK LIKE THEY WANT TO--
--KILL US!
CONTINUED ON 35P PAGE FOLLOWING.

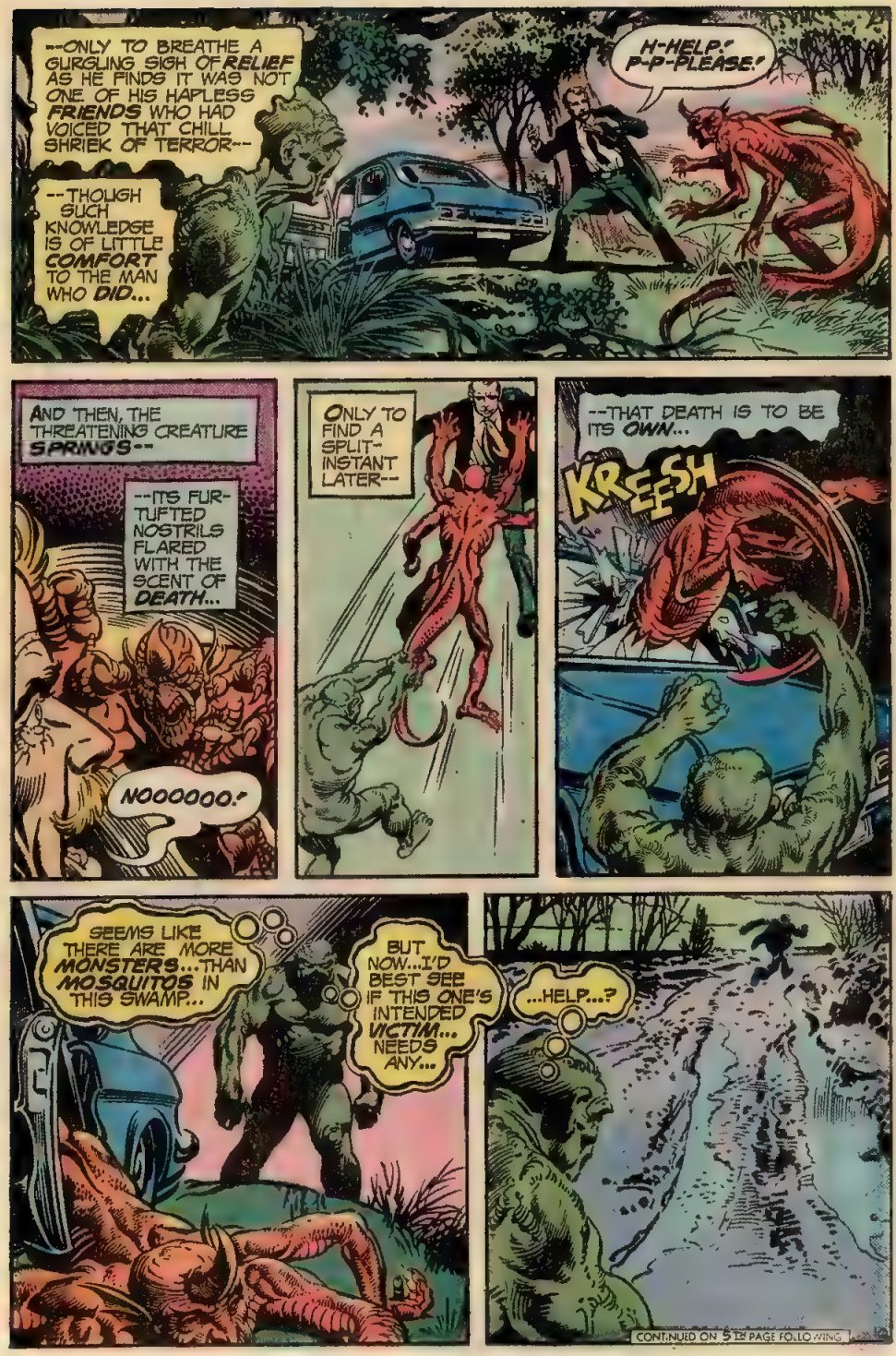
BUT THEN...
NOW, NOW, NO NEED TO GET EXCITED, MA'AM. THEY DON'T MEAN ANY HARM. THEY'RE JUST A BIT LEERY OF STRANGERS, THAT'S ALL.
I'M AUBREY TRASK-- AND I'M, UH, IN CHARGE AROUND HERE.
WE CAN DISCUSS THE RECEPTION COMMITTEE LATER, TRASK. THIS MAN NEEDS MEDICAL ATTENTION NOW!
SURE THING, FRIEND. JUST BRING HIM THIS WAY--THE INFIRMARY'S RIGHT DOWN THE BLOCK.
AND SOON, AMID ANTI-SEPTIC SURROUNDINGS, SOOTHING OINTMENTS ARE APPLIED...AND CURIOUS EXPLANATIONS MADE...
THAT'S RIGHT, MISS ARCANE, THIS HERE'S SERENITY VILLAGE-- THE END PRODUCT OF 10 YEARS' RESEARCH. THE BACKERS SAY IT'S THE ULTIMATE IN RETIREMENT FACILITIES.
BUT, WHY DOES IT LOOK SO... BIZARRE?
WELL, MA'AM, SEEMS THAT SOMEWHERE ALONG THE LINE, SOMEONE FIGURED A RETURN TO A CHILDHOOD ENVIRONMENT WOULD EASE THE JOLT OF BEING PUT OUT TO PASTURE.
SERENITY VILLAGE IS THE FIRST PRACTICAL TEST OF THAT THEORY.
WE'D LOVE TO HEAR MORE ABOUT YOUR PROJECT, TRASK-- LATER. RIGHT NOW, OUR FRIEND HERE NEEDS A HOSPITAL.
RIGHT YA ARE, MR. CABLE. I'LL GO PHONE FOR AN AMBULANCE STRAIGHT AWAY.


BUT, ONCE OUTSIDE...
AUBREY! WHY'RE YOU WASTIN' TIME TREATIN' THEM YOUNG UNS' WOUNDS? WHERE THEY'RE GOIN' IT WON'T MATTER NONE!
NOW, MARION, YOU KNOW THE PROCEDURE.
THEY NEED TO BE AT FULL STRENGTH. WHY, IF THEY WERE TO DIE BEFORE THE PROCESS WAS COMPLETED, WE'D LOSE EVERYTHING.
JUST BE PATIENT, MARION-- AND TRUST ME.
WELL ...ALL RIGHT...
...DARLING.
BUT MAY-DECEMBER ROMANCES HOLD LITTLE INTEREST FOR A CERTAIN MOSSY MAN-BRUTE--FOR HE HAS MORE SOMBER THOUGHTS TO CONSIDER...
LOUISIANA... FLORIDA... A SWAMP'S STILL A SWAMP...
I GUESS SOME THINGS JUST NEVER... HUH?
A GRAVEYARD...? EVEN HERE...MY PAST WON'T LET ME BE...
EVER SINCE THOSE BLASTED EXPERIMENTS... BACK IN THE BAYOU... ALL I'VE KNOWN IS DEATH...
MY WIFE... MY FRIENDS... NOTHING BUT DEATH... DEATH...
DAMN YOU, DEATH!
KRAK!

YOU LEAVE ME NOTHING... BUT A FUTURE AS COLD AND BLEAK...AS THIS STONE...
LOST IN CONTEMPLATION, THE MIRY MONSTROSITY DOESN'T NOTICE THAT THE SANCTUARY OF THE QUIET GLADE HAS BEEN BREACHED BY ANOTHER--
--A SHADOWY FIGURE WHOSE STEALTH GUISES THOUGHTS FAR LESS MELANCHOLY THAN HIS OWN--
--BUT WHOSE ACTIONS PROVE QUITE EQUALLY DESTRUCTIVE...
HSSSSSHSSSSSSSSSS
WHA--?


DON'T KNOW WHAT THIS THING IS... BUT IT SURE SEEMS TO HAVE A FIRST CLASS HATE ON... FOR BIG GREEN MONSTERS...!
MAYBE THIS WILL GIVE IT... SOMETHING ELSE TO THINK ABOUT...!
SWATCH
BUT...
SWELL...! LOOKS LIKE TALL, DARK AND UGLY... WON'T TAKE NO FOR AN ANSWER...!
GUESS I'LL JUST HAVE TO...
...TRY A LESS SUBTLE FORM...
...OF DISCOURAGEMENT...!
KRRAK
SOMETHING TELLS ME... I'D BEST GET BACK TO THAT VILLAGE... FAST...!
BECAUSE UNLESS MY SLIMY PLAYMATE HERE... IS AN UNLIKELY FREAK OF NATURE...
...I'VE A FEELING MATT CABLE AND FRIENDS... ARE GOING TO BE NEEDING MY HELP... AFTER ALL...
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

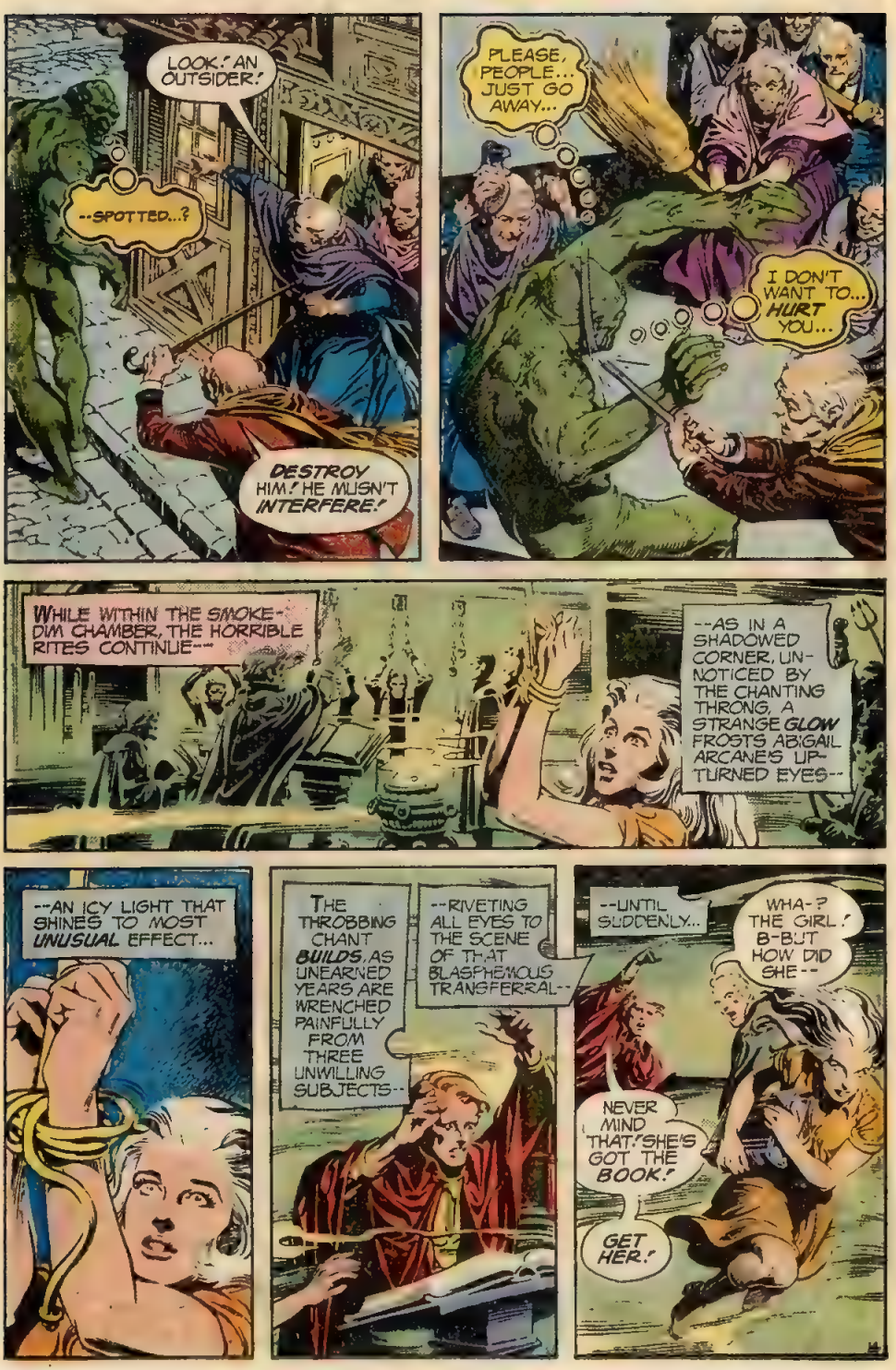

AN ASTUTE OBSERVATION, SWAMP THING. FOR AT THAT VERY MOMENT IN SERENITY VILLAGE...
I WONDER WHAT'S KEEPING THAT AMBULANCE? MAYBE I'D BETTER--
OHHHHH... WH-WHAT... WHERE...?
BOLT! YOU... YOU'RE ALL RIGHT?!
BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! YOU WERE NEARLY DEAD! YOUR INJURIES--
--HAVE HEALED QUITE SATISFACTORILY, MR. CABLE. THANKS TO OUR SPECIAL POTIONS.
FOR YOU SEE, YOU'RE WORTH A GREAT DEAL MORE TO US ALIVE THAN DEAD. AFTER ALL--
--HOW CAN ONE SACRIFICE A CORPSE?
BUT A SHORT SHAMBLE AWAY, THE LUMBERING SWAMP BEAST IS BLISSFULLY UNAWARE OF THESE LATEST DEVELOPMENTS...
...WHEN SUDDENLY...
EYAAAAAA
A SCREAM...! GOD HELP ME... IF I'M TOO LATE...!
HURRIEDLY, THE ROOT-TANGLED MONSTROSITY CRASHES THROUGH THE THIN BARRIER OF VINES AND ROTTING BRANCHES--
9


--ONLY TO BREATHE A GURGLING SIGH OF RELIEF AS HE FINDS IT WAS NOT ONE OF HIS HAPLESS FRIENDS WHO HAD VOICED THAT CHILL SHRIEK OF TERROR--
--THOUGH SUCH KNOWLEDGE IS OF LITTLE COMFORT TO THE MAN WHO DID...
H-HELP! P-P-PLEASE!
AND THEN, THE THREATENING CREATURE SPRINGS--
--ITS FUR-TUFTED NOSTRILS FLARED WITH THE SCENT OF DEATH...
NOOOOOO!
ONLY TO FIND A SPLIT-INSTANT LATER--
--THAT DEATH IS TO BE ITS OWN...
KREESH
SEEMS LIKE THERE ARE MORE MONSTERS...THAN MOSQUITOS IN THIS SWAMP...
BUT NOW...I'D BEST SEE IF THIS ONE'S INTENDED VICTIM... NEEDS ANY...
...HELP...?
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING

SECONDS LATER, AT THE EDGE OF SERENITY VILLAGE...
G-GOT TO FIND SOMEONE! GET SOME HELP! BUT WHERE--
ADMINISTR
THE ADMINISTRATION OFFICE! THEY'LL HAVE A PHONE THERE!
HEY, MISTER! Y-YOU GOTTA CALL THE POLICE! THERE'S MONSTERS IN THE SWAMP! DO YOU HEAR, THERE'S--
BUT WORDS DIE AS THE CRAZED MAN SPINS A WELL-OILED CHAIR AROUND--
--AND FACES A HORROR THAT MAKES THE OTHER GROTESQUERIES HE HAS WITNESSED THIS DAY GROW PALE IN COMPARISON...
BUT, MERCIFULLY, IT IS A SIGHT THAT IS CUT PAINFULLY SHORT...
WHOK
EDDIES OF THICK TIME SWIM BY UNNOTICED...AND THEN...
UHHHHHHH...
WELCOME TO SERENITY VILLAGE, FRIEND. BETTER KNOWN AS--
--BEDLAM!
HUH? BUT WHAT--?
IF YOU'RE GOING TO ASK WHAT'S GOING ON HERE, FELLA, WE WERE HOPING YOU COULD TELL US!

BUT I... I DON'T KNOW! MY NAME IS NICHOLAS TRASK AND--
TRASK? THEN YOU'RE SOME KIN TO THE HEAD LOONY AROUND HERE?
LOONY?! I-I DON'T UNDERSTAND. MY PARENTS ARE HERE--I WAS JUST COMING TO SEE THEM--BUT THEY'RE BOTH PATIENTS. I BROUGHT THEM HERE SOME MONTHS AGO--
--TO LIVE OUT OUR LIVES AS USELESS VEGETABLES!
WHA-? F-FATHER?! B-BUT IT CAN'T BE! YOU'RE OVER 70 YEARS OLD!
THAT'S RIGHT, NICHOLAS, I AM! BUT, YOU SEE, SOME OF US "OLD FOGIES" RESENT BEING HERDED INTO SOME SMELLY SWAMP TO DIE!
WE REFUSE TO WASTE OUR LAST VITAL YEARS PLAYING CHECKERS AND SUCKING OUR GUMS. AND SO WE TAKE UP OTHER INTERESTS.
ONE OF MINE WAS--- THE OCCULT!
THROUGH METHODS YOU'D NEVER COMPREHEND, I OBTAINED A COPY OF THAT DREADED BOOK, THE EBON-TOME. AND A SPELL FROM ITS TAINTED PAGES HAS ENABLED US TO REGAIN LOST YOUTH--
--BY DRAINING IT FROM OTHERS!
THEN...THAT MAN IN THE ADMINISTRATION OFFICE--
--WAS THE REAL DIRECTOR OF THE VILLAGE. AND THE DONOR OF MY NEW PRIME.
AND WITH THOSE MONSTERS YOU SPOKE OF-- THE RESULTS OF A SEPARATE INCANTATION-- WE WILL HERD COUNTLESS OTHERS HERE--
--SO THAT THEIR YEARS MAY BECOME OURS!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

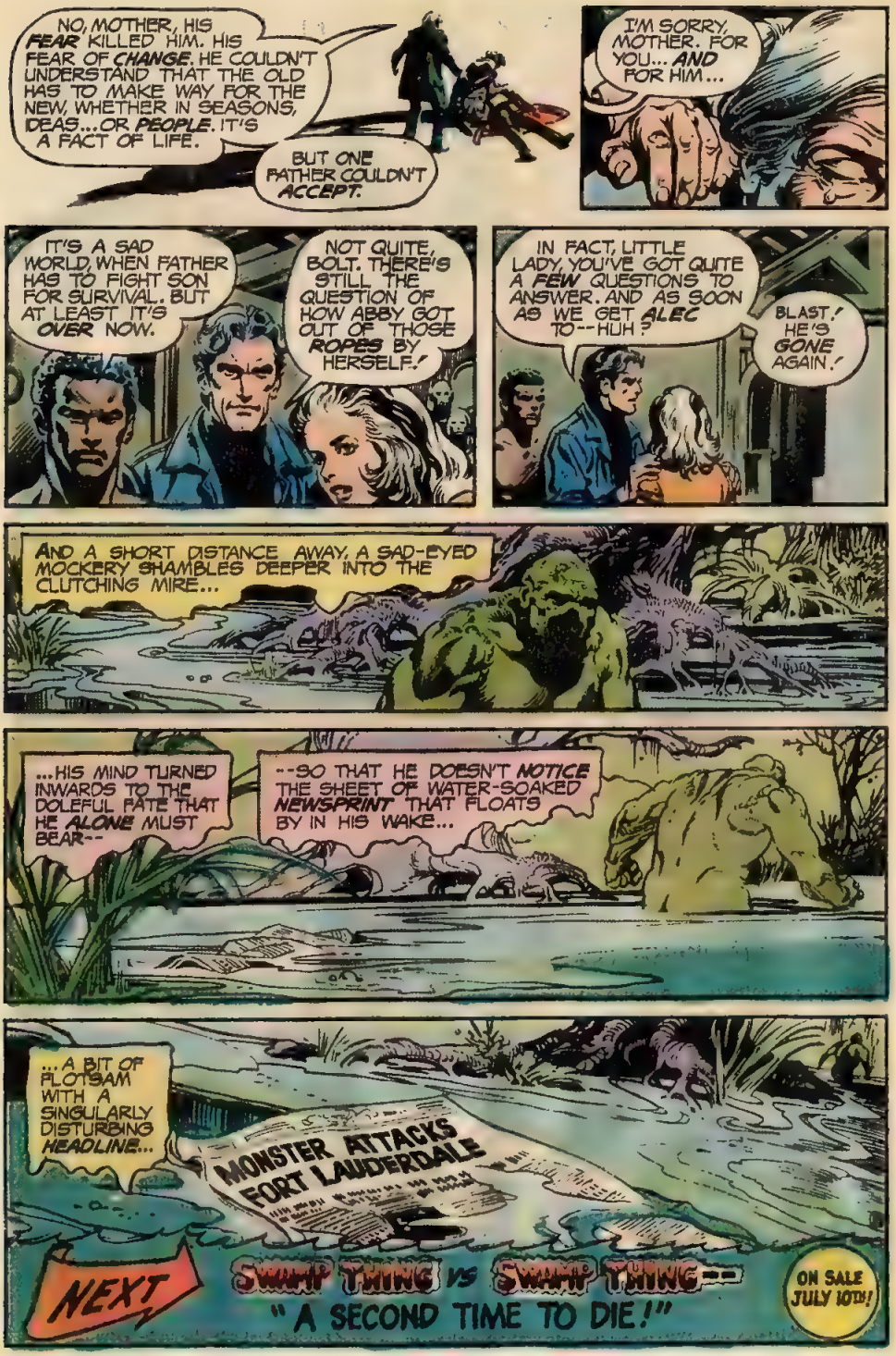
BUT, FATHER, WHY--
WHY? HAVE YOU EVER TRIED LIVING IN A WORLD WHERE WRINKLES ARE TREATED LIKE PLAGUE? WHERE AT THE MAGIC AGE OF 65 ONE'S WORTH IS TURNED OFF LIKE A LIGHT SWITCH?
WE'RE TIRED OF HAVING OUR LIVES CONTROLLED BY YOUNG FOOLS WHO JUST WANT US OUT OF THE WAY SO THEY CAN TAKE OUR PLACE! AND WE'RE FIGHTING BACK--
--THE ONLY WAY WE CAN!
WE'LL DRAIN THE MEN FIRST, DARLING. AND THEN THE GIRL WILL BE YOURS!
DARK CANDLES ARE LIT, AND EVEN DARKER WORDS SPOKEN--VILE PHRASES FROM A BOOK SPAWNED NOT IN THIS WORLD--
--AS, SLOWLY, THE ROOM FILLS WITH THE ACRID STENCH OF SULFUR...
...AND A STARTLING, UNHOLY CHANGE BEGINS...
WHILE OUTSIDE...
EVERYTHING LOOKS PEACEFUL ENOUGH...
NOW IF I CAN JUST FIND CABLE AND COMPANY... WITHOUT BEING--


LOOK! AN OUTSIDER!
--SPOTTED...?
DESTROY HIM! HE MUSN'T INTERFERE!
PLEASE, PEOPLE... JUST GO AWAY...
I DON'T WANT TO... HURT YOU...
WHILE WITHIN THE SMOKE-DIM CHAMBER, THE HORRIBLE RITES CONTINUE--
--AS IN A SHADOWED CORNER, UNNOTICED BY THE CHANTING THRONG, A STRANGE GLOW FROSTS ABIGAIL ARCANE'S UPTURNED EYES--
--AN ICY LIGHT THAT SHINES TO MOST UNUSUAL EFFECT...
THE THROBBING CHANT BUILDS, AS UNEARNED YEARS ARE WRENCHED PAINFULLY FROM THREE UNWILLING SUBJECTS--
--RIVETING ALL EYES TO THE SCENE OF THAT BLASPHEMOUS TRANSFERRAL--
--UNTIL SUDDENLY...
WHA-? THE GIRL! B-BUT HOW DID SHE--
NEVER MIND THAT! SHE'S GOT THE BOOK!
GET HER!

THE LITHE GIRL RUNS, BUT SALVATION SEEMS FOREDOOMED--FOR EVEN WITH WITHERED, BRITTLE FOES, THERE IS STRENGTH IN NUMBERS...
C'MON, GIRLY-- GIVE!
BUT THEN, LIKE A MARIONETTE CONTROLLED BY UNSEEN STRINGS, A BEAUTIFUL HEAD WHIRLS 'ROUND--
--AND PALE BLUE EYES GLAZE ONCE MORE WITH AN UNKNOWN RADIANCE...
ALEC...
I'VE BATTLED WEREWOLVES, ZOMBIES AND DEMONS...
...BUT HOW DO YOU FIGHT LITTLE OLD LADIES... WITHOUT-- HUH?
ALEC! HEEEEEELP!
SORRY, FOLKS, BUT PLAYTIME'S OVER...
BECAUSE IN CASE YOU DIDN'T HEAR... THAT WAS A SCREAM FOR HELP...
AND IT'S HELP...
KARASH
...I'M GOING TO GIVE...!
AAAIIEEEE

DON'T KNOW EXACTLY WHAT'S GOING ON HERE...BUT I CAN FIGURE THAT OUT... AFTER I'VE--
ALEC! LOOK OUT FOR--
BUT THE WARNING COMES TOO LATE, AS...
NIMBOS ETNACTICOS LAZIM BHID-AR!
HEAT SWELLS THE FETID AIR AS THOUGH THE VERY GATES OF HELL HAD BURST OPEN--
--AS, WITH A HISS LIKE A WOUNDED SERPENT, FLICKERING BRAZIER-FLAMES GROW, UNITE--
--AND ATTACK...
}AGH{ THIS THING ...HAS NO SUBSTANCE...! CAN'T GET HOLD OF IT...!
BUT IT'S NOT HAVING ANY TROUBLE... DOING A JOB ON ME...!
ALEC! GET THE BOOK! HE'S POWERLESS WITHOUT IT!
NO GOOD...! CAN'T GET THROUGH... THIS WALL OF FIRE...!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

I'M AFRAID IT'S ALL OVER, MISS ARCANE--YOUR MONSTROUS FRIEND CAN'T HELP YOU NOW.!
PERHAPS HE CAN'T, FATHER--
--BUT I CAN.!
WHA-? NICHOLAS.! STOP.! Y-YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING.! YOU DON'T--
NOOOOOOO.!
FOR A MOMENT, THE ANCIENT BOOK HANGS SUSPENDED, FLOATING AMID THE LICKING, HUNGERING FLAMES...
AND THEN, LIKE A MINIATURE NOVA, IT SWELLS TO A VIOLENT GLOBE OF UNNATURAL LIGHT, FEEDING ON ITS OWN SUBSTANCE--
--TAKING THE HIDEOUS, FLAME-LIMBED DEMON WITH IT...
...UNTIL THERE IS NOTHING LEFT BUT SMOKE...AND SILENCE...
AND IN THE STILL OF THE AFTERMATH...
CABLE... WE'RE YOUNG AGAIN.! THE SPELL MUST HAVE REVERSED ITSELF WHEN THE BOOK BURNED.!
YES, BUT WHAT ABOUT--
HE'S DEAD, NICHOLAS.! HIS HEART COULDN'T TAKE THE STRAIN ...OF AGING AGAIN.!
--FATHER?!
YOU'VE KILLED HIM.!


NO, MOTHER, HIS FEAR KILLED HIM. HIS FEAR OF CHANGE. HE COULDN'T UNDERSTAND THAT THE OLD HAS TO MAKE WAY FOR THE NEW, WHETHER IN SEASONS, IDEAS...OR PEOPLE. IT'S A FACT OF LIFE.
BUT ONE FATHER COULDN'T ACCEPT.
I'M SORRY, MOTHER. FOR YOU... AND FOR HIM...
IT'S A SAD WORLD, WHEN FATHER HAS TO FIGHT SON FOR SURVIVAL. BUT AT LEAST IT'S OVER NOW.
NOT QUITE, BOLT. THERE'S STILL THE QUESTION OF HOW ABBY GOT OUT OF THOSE ROPES BY HERSELF!
IN FACT, LITTLE LADY, YOU'VE GOT QUITE A FEW QUESTIONS TO ANSWER. AND AS SOON AS WE GET ALEC TO--HUH?
BLAST! HE'S GONE AGAIN!
AND A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, A SAD-EYED MOCKERY SHAMBLES DEEPER INTO THE CLUTCHING MIRE...
...HIS MIND TURNED INWARDS TO THE DOLEFUL FATE THAT HE ALONE MUST BEAR--
--SO THAT HE DOESN'T NOTICE THE SHEET OF WATER-SOAKED NEWSPRINT THAT FLOATS BY IN HIS WAKE...
...A BIT OF FLOTSAM WITH A SINGULARLY DISTURBING HEADLINE...
MONSTER ATTACKS FORT LAUDERDALE
NEXT
SWAMP THING VS SWAMP THING--
"A SECOND TIME TO DIE!"
ON SALE JULY 10TH!

THE BRAVE and the BOLD
THE LINE OF DC SUPER-STARS
BATMAN AND SWAMP THING
25¢ NO. 122 OCT. 30440

the BRAVE and the BOLD

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

PRESENTS

BATMAN AND SWAMP THING

BACK OFF, BATMAN!

THAT MONSTER WRECKED OUR CITY--AND WE'RE GOING TO KILL HIM!

"HOUR OF THE BEAST"

IN THE STONE HEART OF GOTHAM CITY, AN AWED THRONG RECOILS IN FEAR AT A MOSSY MAN-BRUTE WHO STRAINS AT GIANT CHAINS... A CREATURE FROM THEIR OWN NIGHTMARISH VISIONS AND FANTASIES!
BATMAN
AND
SWAMP THING
B.B. RIGG PRESENTS THE WONDER OF THE AGES
MY GOD! WHO'D A- THOUGHT SUCH A THING EXISTED?
HOPE THOSE CHAINS ARE STRONG ENOUGH!
OOH, I'M GOING TO FAINT--!
NATURE... FATE--CALL IT WHAT YOU WILL--SPAWNS THE BIZARRE, THE UNBELIEVABLE, THE TERRIFYING --AND MEN ARE ITS PUNY PLAYTHINGS! SO IT IS NOW, WHEN EVEN THE GREAT BATMAN AND THE VAST CITY HE LOVES, MUST BOW BEFORE THE DESTROYING WHIRLWIND... WHEN TOLLS...
THE HOUR OF THE BEAST
MOMMY! CAN'T I PET HIM??
BLAZES! I CAN'T BELIEVE IT! SWAMP THING... HERE IN GOTHAM... A FREAK ON EXHIBITION?!
STORY - BOB HANEY • ART - JIM APARO
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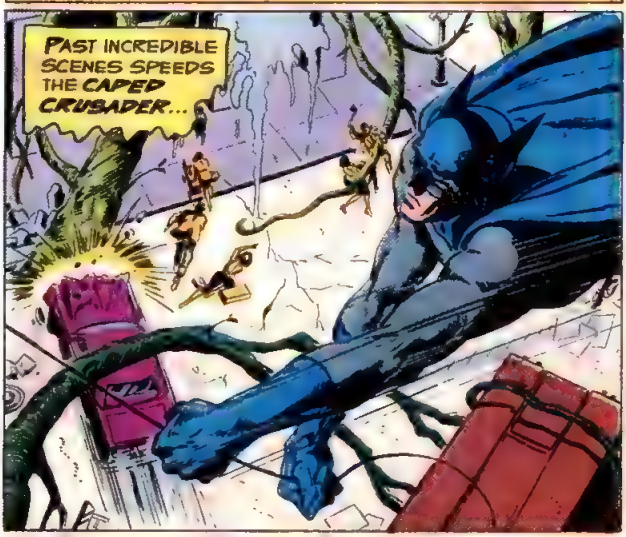
PART 1
MONSTER, MONSTER, BURNING BRIGHT!
AS THE ENCHAINED CREATURE GAZES BACK WITH SUFFERING EYES AT THE KNOT OF CURIOUS HUMANITY...
YES, BATMAN, IT'S MY GREATEST TRIUMPH!
B.B. RIGGS--!?
IN THE FLESH, FELLA! I'M DONE PROMOTING TATTOOED LADIES, THAWED-OUT MASTODONS, AND SHRUNKEN HEAD COLLECTIONS!
SWAMP THING IS A SENSATION... UNIQUE! AFTER INTRODUCING HIM HERE, I'M EXHIBITING HIM WORLDWIDE FOR MONEY! BIG MONEY!!
RIGGS ISN'T AWARE SWAMP THING AND I MET BEFORE--*
* IN SWAMP THING NO. 7
"I'D HEARD A RUMOR OF SUCH A BRUTE, LIVING DOWN IN THE BAYOUS AND BOGS! SURE ENOUGH, WE FLUSHED HIM OUT..."
"THE BIG GOON FIGURED HE'D SHRUG OFF OUR GUNS--BUT HE DIDN'T FIGURE THEY'D BE LOADED WITH... BIO-BLOCKING FOAM!"
SMOTHERING ME... DRAINING MY... STRENGTH...
THE FOAM TURNED HIM MEEK AS A KITTEN... AND EASILY CAGED!
BUT IT'S INHUMAN TO DISPLAY HIM! HE'S NOT AN EVIL CREATURE!
INHUMAN?! THAT BEAST ISN'T A PERSON! IT'S A THING! GOOD OR BAD, WHO CARES? I ONLY KNOW I'VE GOT A LEGAL PERMIT TO SHOW HIM, AND HE'S GONNA MAKE ME RICHER THAN I ALREADY AM!
2

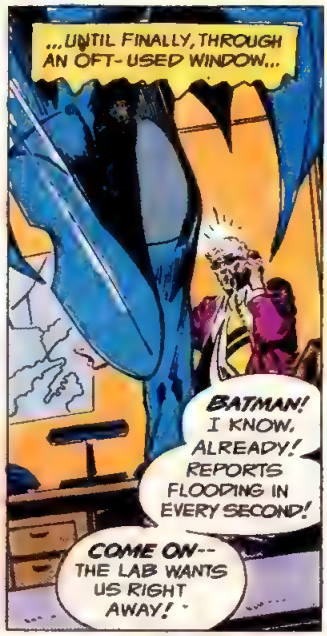
NOW AS SUMMER RAIN STARTS TO FALL...
AND THE HELPLESS, MUCK-ENCRUSTED CREATURE TURNS GRATEFUL EYES TOWARD THE PELTING, LIFE-SUSTAINING DROPS...
NOBODY KNOWS SWAMP THING HELPED ME DESTROY AN ARCH CRIMINAL! I DON'T LIKE HIM TURNED INTO A FREAK SHOW!
BUT EVEN THE BATMAN KNOWS NOT SWAMP THING'S TRUE ORIGIN--OF HOW HE WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND, BRILLIANT DEVELOPER OF A BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA...
HOW HE REFUSED TO SELL THE FORMULA TO A SECRET ORGANIZATION, THE CONCLAVE, WHICH SABOTAGED HIS LAB, RESULTING IN A DEVASTATING BLOW-UP!
HIS BELOVED WIFE, LINDA, DEAD, ALEC HOLLAND THREW HIS BURNING, AGONIZED BODY INTO THE COOLING, MERCIFUL BOG...
SSSSS
THE BOG-WHOSE ROT AND GASES COMBINED WITH HIS OWN CHEMICAL-COATED FORM TO CHANGE HIM INTO A MISSHAPEN MOCKERY OF LIFE...NO LONGER A MAN--BUT A SWAMP THING!!

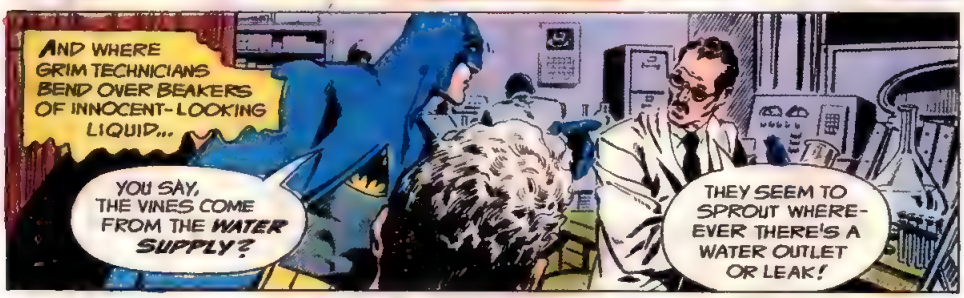
YES, THE SAGA OF SWAMP THING HAS TAKEN MANY TURNS--FOR IN A SECRET BUILDING COMPLEX ON THE GROUNDS OF A MILITARY ACADEMY OUTSIDE WASHINGTON, D.C.--
EXACTLY, COMMANDER ...EXHIBITED AS A FREAK IN GOTHAM CITY!
AT LAST! I'D GIVEN UP THINKING WE'D EVER MEET UP WITH OUR QUARRY AGAIN!
THAT MONSTER MUST RETURN TO GOVERNMENT CUSTODY AND GIVE UP HIS SECRETS! PUT STORM UNIT ALPHA ON IT! GET SWAMP THING!
AND THIS VERY NIGHT, THE SAME RAIN THAT PELTS GOTHAM CITY IS A RAGING THUNDERSTORM IN THE MOUNTAINS UPSTATE, WHICH TOSSES A SMALL PLANE LIKE A LEAF...
NO ONE SEES THE DERELICT CRAFT SPIN INTO THE ROILING WATERS OF A GIANT RESERVOIR...
NOR DO HUMAN EYES BEHOLD THE PILOT'S FATE IN THE SURROUNDING WIND-WHIPPED FORESTS...
AND AS THE SKIES CLEAR NEXT MORNING OVER A CITY AWAKENING TO THE MOST FANTASTIC DAY IN ITS HISTORY,..
IT MUST BE 90 DEGREES ALREADY!
BETTER GO CHECK ON SWAMP THING--!
AS OFFICES BEGIN WORK, A SECRETARY PUTS FLOWERS ON HER DESK...
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.
4

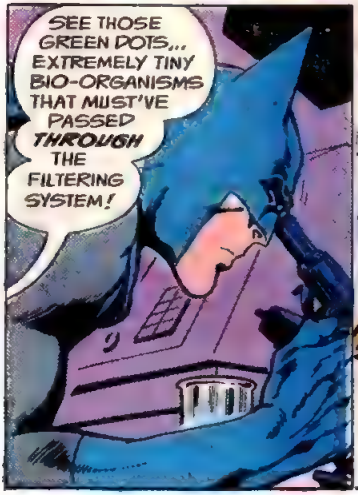
ALMOST INSTANTLY...
EEEEEEEE
WHILE JUST A BLOCK AWAY...
WASH IT GOOD, KID! THIS CHARIOT COST ME PLENTY!
THE NEXT MOMENT...
YEEEOOW
AND BELOW THE STEAMING STREETS, WHERE A LEAKY WATER MAIN SEEPS INTO AN ADJACENT SUBWAY TUNNEL...
SKR
EEECCH
NOW THE MENACING VINES ERUPT FROM THE VERY STREETS...
GREAT BLAZES! GOT TO GET TO POLICE HQ--FAST!
BETTER NOT LET ANY GRASS GROW UNDER YOUR CAPE, BATMAN--FOR GOTHAM FACES GREEN DEATH IN PART 2... NEXT!
5

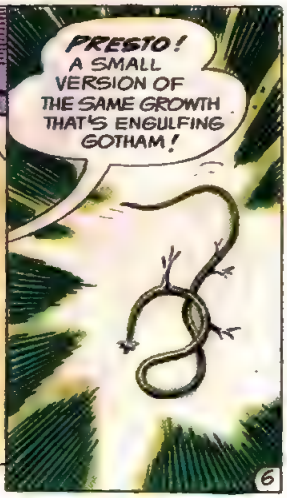
PART 2 GREEN GROWS DEATH




...UNTIL FINALLY, THROUGH AN OFT-USED WINDOW...
BATMAN! I KNOW, ALREADY! REPORTS FLOODING IN EVERY SECOND!
COME ON-- THE LAB WANTS US RIGHT AWAY!


AND WHERE GRIM TECHNICIANS BEND OVER BEAKERS OF INNOCENT-LOOKING LIQUID...
YOU SAY, THE VINES COME FROM THE WATER SUPPLY?
THEY SEEM TO SPROUT WHEREEVER THERE'S A WATER OUTLET OR LEAK!



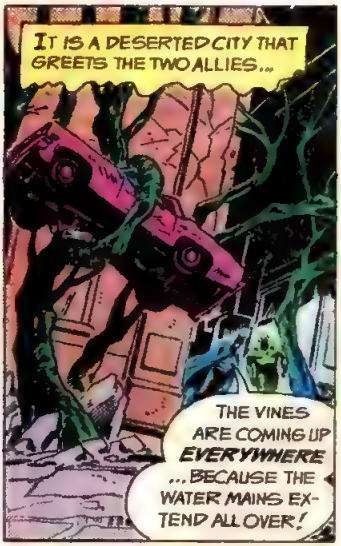


WE CAN SHUT DOWN THE WATER SUPPLY... BUT WHAT'S ALREADY IN THE MAINS IS LOADED WITH THOSE GREEN DOTS!
I'VE ALREADY ORDERED THE ANSWER... AND HERE IT COMES!
CROP DUSTER PLANES! THEY'LL HIT THOSE VINES WITH DEFOLIANT AND STOP 'EM DEAD!
LIKE A FIGHTER FORMATION FROM A FORGOTTEN WAR, THE BIPLANES DIVE BELOW THE SKY-SCRAPER SUMMITS, SPRAYING A CLOUD OF CHOKING WHITE DUST...
THEN, THEY PEEL AND SPIRAL BACK TO LAY DOWN ANOTHER BARRAGE...
...TO BE MET BY A GREAT GREEN WAVE LEAPING UPWARDS IN THEIR VERY PATH...
KRUNCH!
KA-RUMP
GOOD LORD!
THE DEFOLIANT-- IT ONLY ACCELERATES THE VINES' GROWTH! WE MUST FIND ANOTHER ANSWER --QUICK!!
7

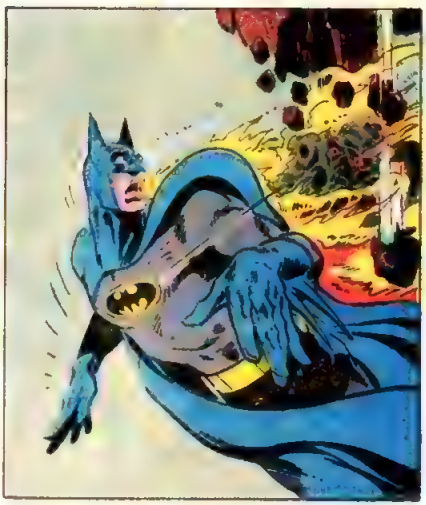
AGAIN, BATMAN FLITS ACROSS HIS THREATENED CITY, FROM HIS PENTHOUSE LAIR IN THE WAYNE FOUNDATION BUILDING...
A HUGE CREEPER SQUEEZING IT!!
AS THE VINE TIGHTENS AROUND THE GREAT TOWER WITH TITANIC POWER...
SKRUNCH!
THAT GIRL--!
CATCH, SMOKE-EATER!
THE FIREMEN CAN EVACUATE THE BUILDING... I'VE GOT TO GET TO THE ONE POSSIBLE SOURCE OF HELP-- SWAMP THING!!
CONTINUED ON 352 PAGE FOLLOWING
8

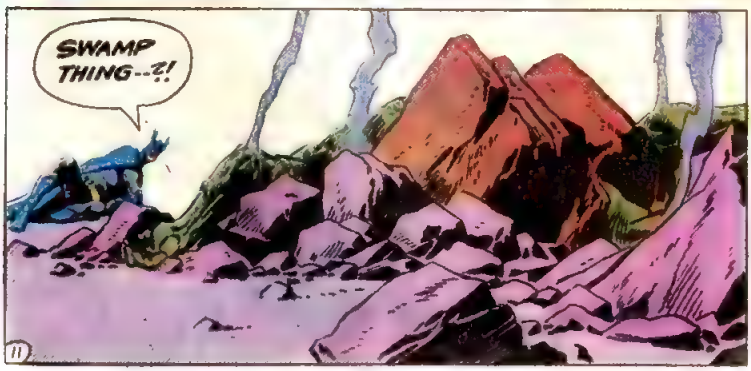
BUT GOTHAM IS NOW A CITY IN PANIC... AND AS A FRIGHTENED, HATEFUL AND IGNORANT MOB SURGES TOWARD AN ENTRAPPED FIGURE...
THAT MONSTER... SOMEHOW IT'S THE CAUSE!
KILL IT! TEAR IT APART!!
BULLETS, ROCKS, HACKING BLADES FALL ON HIS PRIMAL HIDE, BUT PITYING CONTEMPT SOFTENS SWAMP THING'S UGLY FEATURES...
POW
THUK
MANKIND! YOU CALL ME, MONSTER! IF IT MEANS BEING OTHER THAN YOU... I GLADLY ACCEPT THE NAME!
BUT, SUDDENLY, AMIDST THE BRUTAL, HOWLING ASSAULT...
ZZZZZZTTT
A LASER BEAM CUTTING IT FREE!! LOOK OUT!
RUN! GET AWAY!
THE NEXT MOMENT...
STORM UNIT ALPHA TO ZERO! HAVE GOODS ...WILL DELIVER!
THAT COPTER-- IT'S ABDUCTING SWAMP THING--?
ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP IT--!
9

ITS GROTESQUE PRIZE DANGLING BELOW, THE GOVERNMENT CHOPPER WHIRLS OUT OVER THE RIVER, THE WHIRLYBAT IN HOT PURSUIT...
UNTIL...
SPLANNG
SWAMP THING! I KNOW YOU'RE INNOCENT OF THIS CATASTROPHE... BUT THIS CITY NEEDS YOU!
YOU HELPED ONCE BEFORE FOR PRIVATE REASONS... WILL YOU HELP NOW?
THE CREATURE'S EYES CRY OUT THE PAIN IN HIS SOUL... BUT IN THE END, THE MAN TRIUMPHS OVER THE MONSTER...
HELP THOSE WHO GAWKED AT ME... ATTACKED ME? RESCUE MY TORMENTORS?
BUT I WILL... IF ONLY TO SHAME THEIR ROTTEN SOULS!
YES!
THE ENTIRE CITY'S BEING EVACUATED! THINGS MUST BE GETTING WORSE! LET'S GO!
CONTINUED ON 3 TH PAGE FOLLOWING
10


IT IS A DESERTED CITY THAT GREETS THE TWO ALLIES...
THE VINES ARE COMING UP EVERYWHERE ...BECAUSE THE WATER MAINS EXTEND ALL OVER!

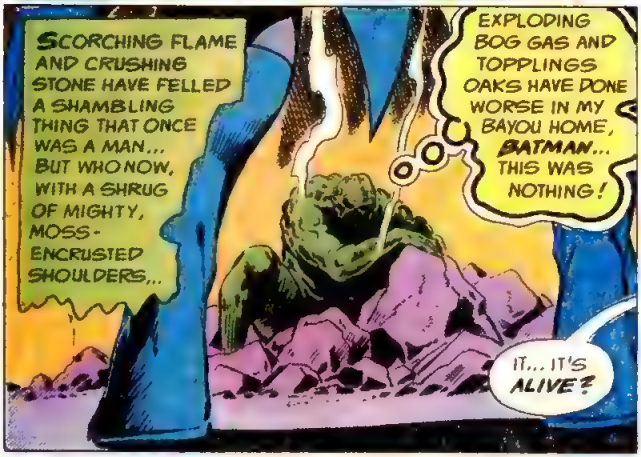
A CITY DESERTED, SAVE FOR THOSE JACKALS WHO ALWAYS PROWL AT THE EDGES OF DISASTER...
BOLINK
POW
TROOPS TRYING TO STOP LOOTERS! KEEP MOVING!





CRUSHED TO EARTH, WILL HE RISE NO MORE?? THE ANSWER-- IN THE CONCLUSION... PART 3... NEXT!

PART 3 LOOK HOMEWARD, HERO


SCORCHING FLAME AND CRUSHING STONE HAVE FELLED A SHAMBLING THING THAT ONCE WAS A MAN... BUT WHO NOW, WITH A SHRUG OF MIGHTY, MOSS-ENCRUSTED SHOULDERS...
EXPLODING BOG GAS AND TOPPLINGS OAKS HAVE DONE WORSE IN MY BAYOU HOME, BATMAN... THIS WAS NOTHING!
IT... IT'S ALIVE?

BATMAN! I THOUGHT IT WAS PART OF THE VINES! I GOT ORDERS TO TRY AND BURN OUT THEIR ROOTS ...BUT IT DOESN'T WORK! THEY'RE FLAME-RESISTANT!
OKAY, SOLDIER! YOU'D BETTER GET OUT OF HERE!

AT THIS MOMENT, AT A SPECIAL GOVERNMENT AIRFIELD OUTSIDE GOTHAM...
SO BATMAN STOLE THE SWAMP THING BACK--? BAD NEWS! BUT IT'LL BE EVEN WORSE IF THE PUBLIC FINDS OUT...

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

KRA-AASSH
THE VINES-- THEY WEAKENED THE PAVING! LOOK-- THEIR ROOTS GROW RIGHT OUT OF THE WATER MAIN JOINTS AND LEAKS!
PERHAPS THAT IS WHAT WE SEEK!
LEAPING DOWN INTO THE CHASM, THE BIZARRE MAN-BEAST SEIZES A GIANT VINE TRUNK...
MAYBE I CAN...
...UPROOT THEM...
...ONE...
...BY ONE!!
SWAMP THING PITS ALL HIS PRIMITIVE STRENGTH AGAINST THE SINUOUS POWER OF THE GIANT PLANT, AND...
RUNNNCH!
YOU DID IT!
BUT I'M HALF-EXHAUSTED! NEVER BE ABLE TO UPROOT ALL OF THEM... WE'RE LICKED, BATMAN!
GORDON TO BATMAN! RE-TURN AT ONCE! WE FOUND SOMETHING!
WAIT HERE... WHILE I CHECK THIS OUT!

LIKE SOME DENIZEN OF THE JUNGLE, THE MASKED MANHUNTER TRAVELS A LEAFY HIGHWAY ACROSS GOTHAM...
...AND SHORTLY...
BATMAN! THIS MAY BE IT! TAKE A LOOK THROUGH THIS MICROSCOPE!
THE GREEN DOTS--OR VINE SPORES--ONE IN EACH COLONY HAS A TINY BROWN GENE SPECK--WHICH, WHEN EXPOSED TO AIR, TRIGGERS THE GALLOPING GROWTH!
ONCE IT STARTS TO GROW, THAT GENE SPECK BECOMES A SPIRALING SLENDER STRIPE ON ONE VINE--THE COLONY'S KING ROOT!
YOU'RE SAYING THE MAIN COLONY STRANGLING THE CITY'S GOT A KING ROOT SOMEWHERE THAT'S THE KEY TO IT ALL?
EXACTLY! DESTROY IT--AND THE COLONY SHOULD DIE!!
THE BUILDING... SHUDDERING!?
THE VINES... THEY'RE ATTACKING IT! YOU'D BETTER EVACUATE, COMMISSIONER! I'M GOING AFTER THAT KING ROOT!
14

BACK TO WHERE HE HAD LEFT HIS GROTESQUE TEAMMATE RACES THE BATMAN...
SWAMP THING... HE'S GONE?!
BLAZES! I NEED HIM TO DESTROY THAT KING ROOT-- IF WE FIND IT! WITHOUT HIM... GOTHAM'S HAD IT! I TOLD HIM TO STAY!
ONLY A FEW STREETS AWAY, A MAN BENT ON RETRIEVING PRIVATE GAIN FROM PUBLIC DISASTER, STALKS HIS QUARRY...
HE'S TRYING TO ESCAPE MY FOAM-SHOOTING RIFLE... BUT B.B. RIGGS ISN'T LOSING THE BIGGEST FREAK ATTRACTION OF THE AGES!
I'M GOING TO GET OUT OF THIS GHOST TOWN, AND TAKE THAT MONSTER WITH ME! PLENTY OF OTHER PLACES THAT'LL PAY PLENTY TO SEE HIM!
HE'S IN MY SIGHTS!
NO, YOU DON'T, RIGGS!
YUNG
YOU SELFISH CRUMB! SWAMP THING'S THIS CITY'S ONLY HOPE!
BUG OUT-- OR I'LL CRACK YOUR GREEDY SKULL!
T-TAKE IT EASY... BATMAN... I...I...DIDN'T KNOW!
GOT TO CATCH HIM!!
15

YOU WANT ME TO FIND THAT KING ROOT IN THIS--?
IT'S HOPELESS!
WHAT? YOU CAN'T QUIT ON ME NOW, YOU LIVING NIGHTMARE! I JUST SAVED YOUR RAUNCHY HIDE!
A MOCKING HINT OF A SMILE CREASES SWAMP THING'S MOSS-ENCRUSTED FEATURES...
YOU USE PSYCHOLOGY ON THE MONSTER, EH, BATMAN? SHAME ME... GET ME ANGRY ENOUGH TO GO ON! NO NEED--I ADMIRE YOUR GUTS AND HONESTY!
COME!
LIKE PYGMIES LOST IN A GIGANTIC FOREST, THE DUO SEARCHES...
WE'RE LOOKING FOR A NEEDLE IN THE BIGGEST HAYSTACK EVER--
HELP... HELP!
WHAT'S THAT?
A KID... TRAPPED... BY A VINE WITH A BROWN STRIPE! THE... KING ROOT!
BATMAN!! I GOT LOST... LEFT BEHIND!
AND WITHIN MOMENTS...
THE BOY'S FREE! NOW IT'S UP TO YOU!
PRAY I HAVE THE STRENGTH--!
YET EVEN AS THE BAYOU BEHEMOTH ENCIRCLES THE GREAT VINE WITH HIS TITANIC ARMS...
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE FOLLOWING
16

AND NOW AS A STORM OF CRIMSON PARTICLES DESCENDS...
GOOD GOD! COPTERS LAYING DOWN MORE DEFOLIANT!
IT'S HITTING SWAMP THING! HE'S STARTING TO SHRED APART!
YOU FOOLS! STOP! IT'S NOT HURTING THE VINES!
NO USE! HOW COULD THEY HEAR ME?!!
THICKER AND THICKER GROWS THE RED DUST CURTAIN, AS WHAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND STRUGGLES DESPERATELY TO UPROOT THE VINE WITH THE TELLTALE STRIPE!
LIKE SOME LUMP OF PRIMAL LIFE FORCE THAT WILL NOT BE DENIED, SWAMP THING EXERTS ALL HIS DYING STRENGTH...
GRAU!
...THEN, TOPPLES TO EARTH...
YOU DID IT! THE VINES...TURNING BROWN! WITHERING!
SWAMP THING--!

AND ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, ALL OVER THE ABANDONED CITY...
GOTHAM POLICE
COMMISSIONER! THE VINES... THEY'RE DYING! THOSE GOVERNMENT CHOPPERS SAVED GOTHAM!
BATMAN WASN'T NEEDED!
BUT WHERE STREETS AND AVENUES ARE BECOMING QUICKLY UNBLOCKED...
THANKS FOR HELPING, RIGGS... NOW WE'VE GOT TO GET HIM AWAY BEFORE PEOPLE RETURN!
SHORTLY...
BRIDGE
SO LONG, KID! REMEMBER, KEEP OUR SECRET!
YOU BET, BATMAN!
WITH THE CITY RETURNING TO NORMAL, NO ONE TAKES NOTICE OF A TRUCK HEADING SOUTHWARDS...
MANY HOURS AND MILES LATER... WHERE THE PEACE OF THE PRIMEVAL BOG REIGNS APART FROM NOISY, SPOILING MANKIND...
THE SWAMP.. IT'S RESTORING HIM! THANK HEAVENS!
AND NOW, WITH A GESTURE THAT IS HALF SALUTE, HALF FAREWELL, THE REBORN MAN-BEAST SHAMBLES OFF INTO HIS ONLY HOME...
WELL, THERE GOES A MILLION BUCKS, BATMAN!
BUT IF EVER SOMEONE DESERVED FREEDOM... IT'S THAT NOBLE SWAMP THING!
AMEN TO THAT, B.B.!
THE END

SWAMP THING
THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
Featuring:
"A SECOND TIME TO DIE!"
25¢
NO. 19
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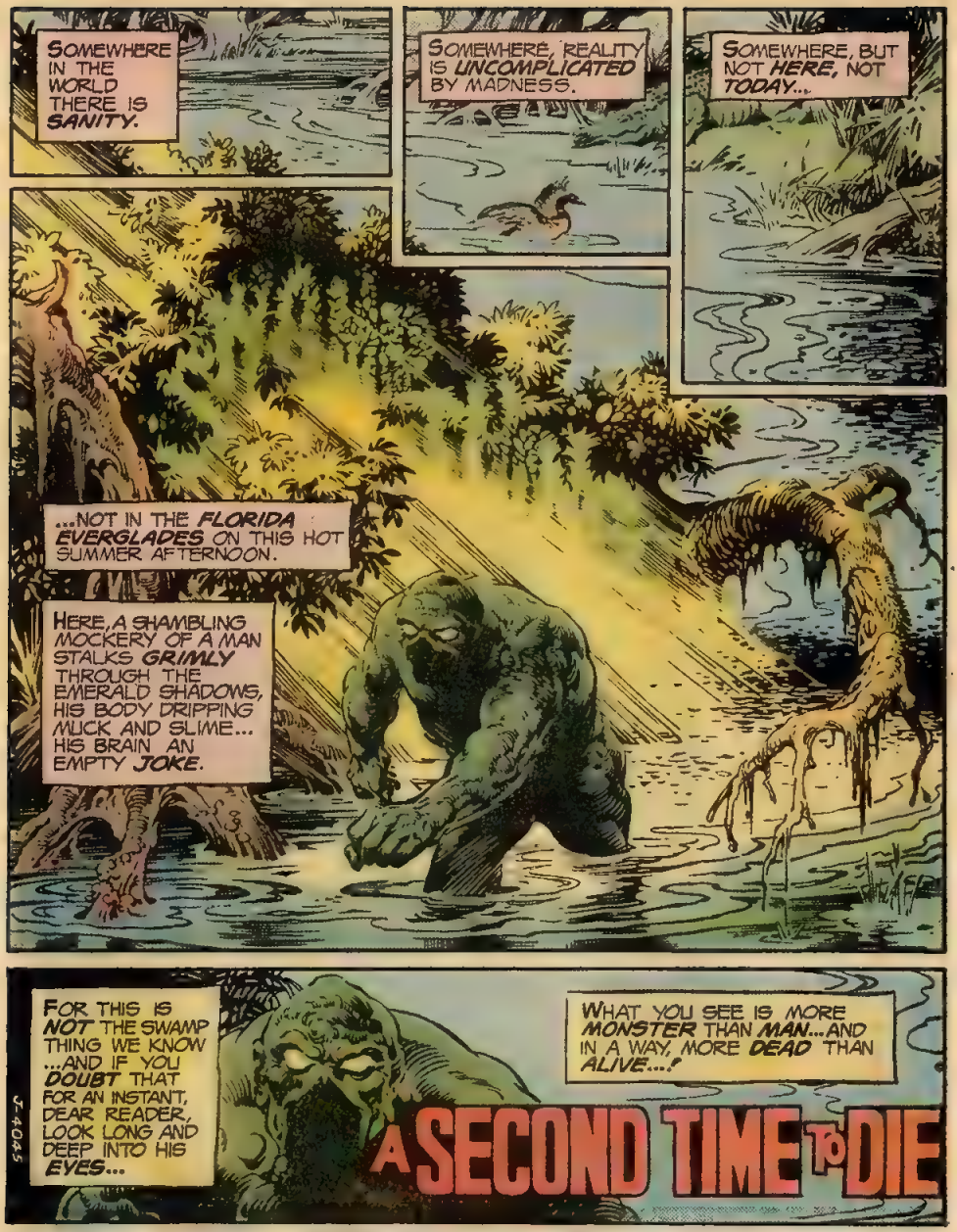
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
SWAMP THING


SOMEWHERE IN THE WORLD THERE IS SANITY.
SOMEWHERE, REALITY IS UNCOMPLICATED BY MADNESS.
SOMEWHERE, BUT NOT HERE, NOT TODAY...
...NOT IN THE FLORIDA EVERGLADES ON THIS HOT SUMMER AFTERNOON.
HERE, A SHAMBLING MOCKERY OF A MAN STALKS GRIMLY THROUGH THE EMERALD SHADOWS, HIS BODY DRIPPING MUCK AND SLIME... HIS BRAIN AN EMPTY JOKE.
FOR THIS IS NOT THE SWAMP THING WE KNOW ...AND IF YOU DOUBT THAT FOR AN INSTANT, DEAR READER, LOOK LONG AND DEEP INTO HIS EYES...
WHAT YOU SEE IS MORE MONSTER THAN MAN...AND IN A WAY, MORE DEAD THAN ALIVE...!
J-4045
A SECOND TIME TO DIE

A GERRY CONWAY (WRITER) - NESTOR REDONDO (ARTIST) - JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION

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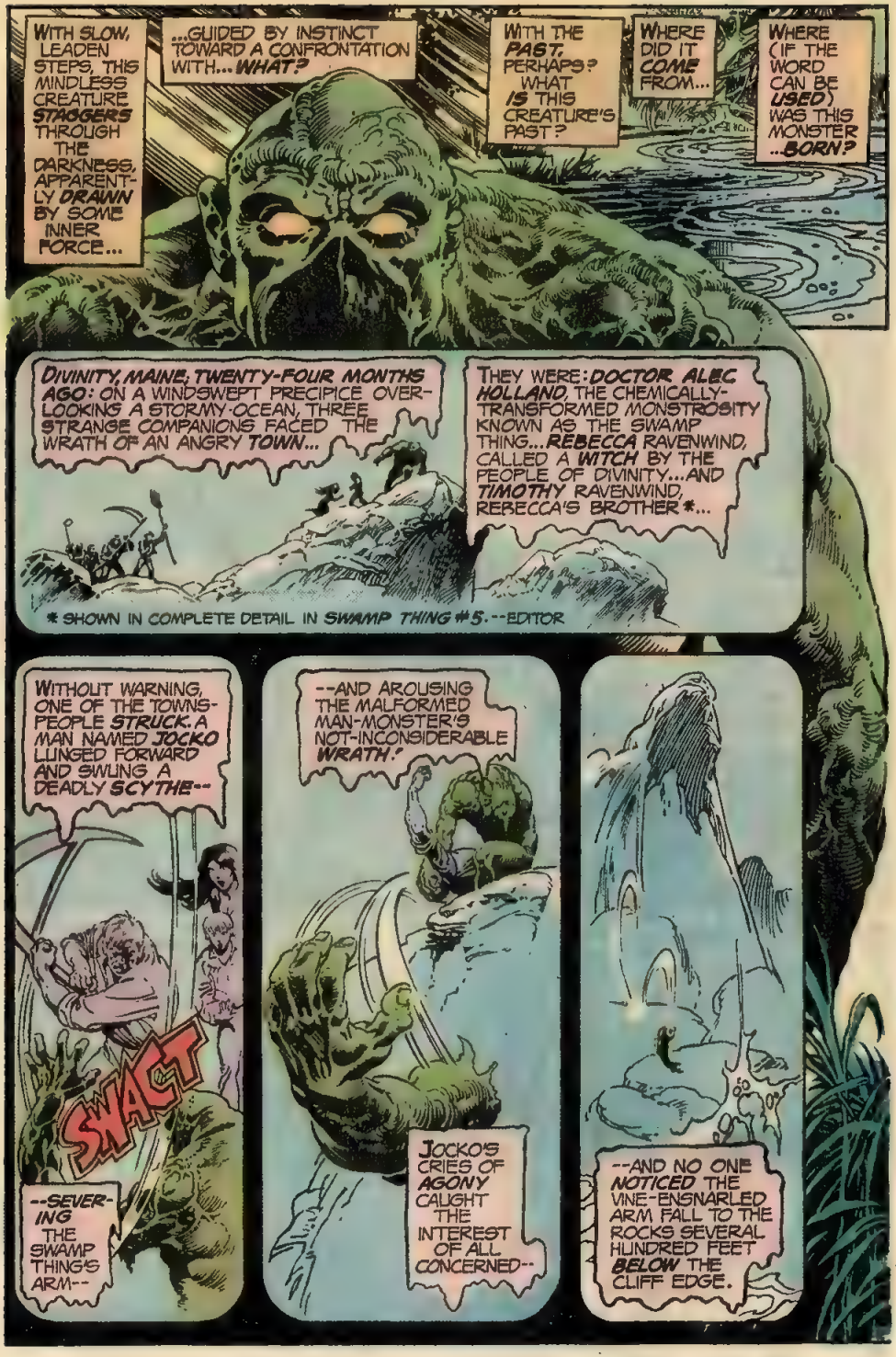
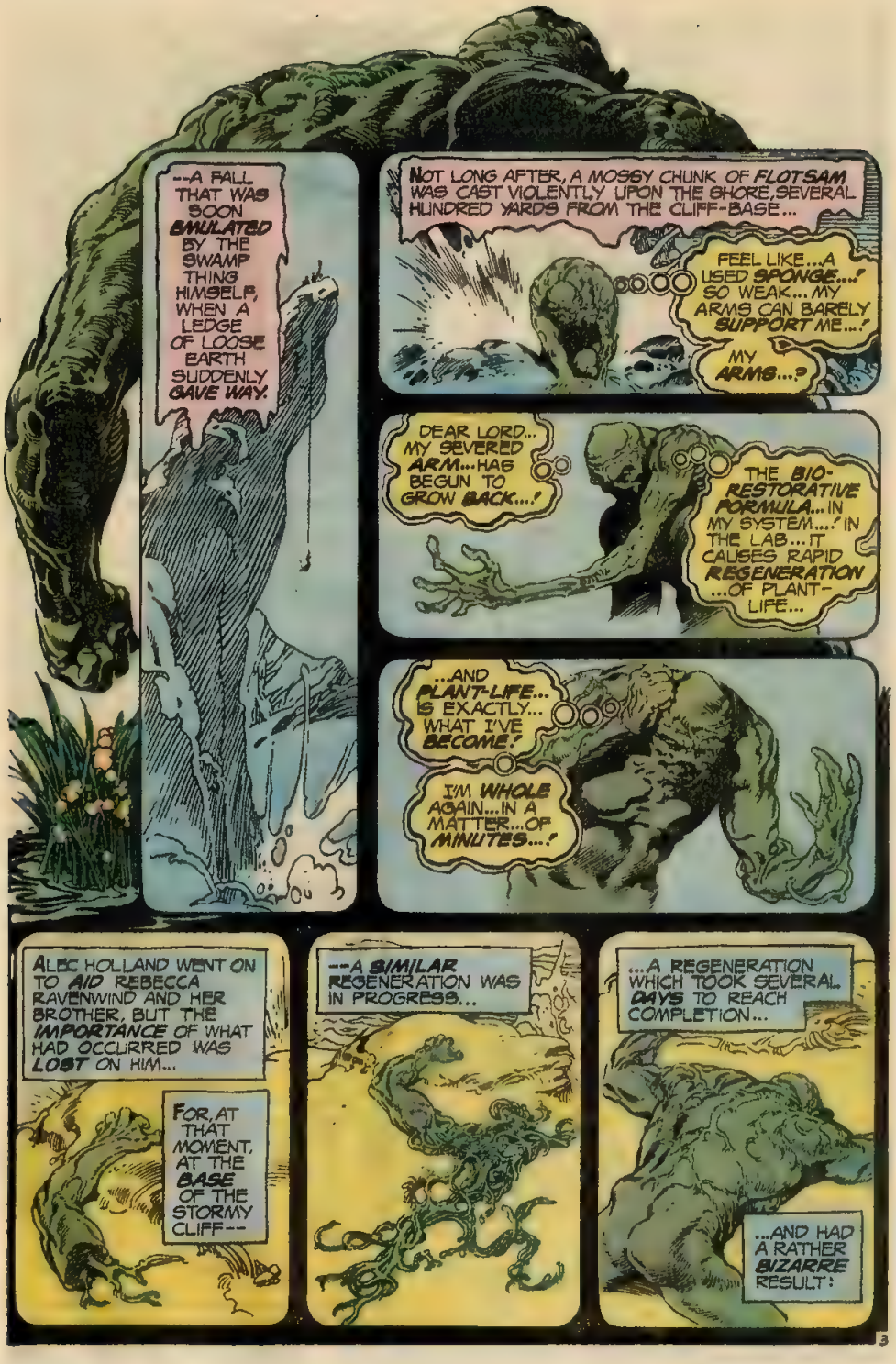
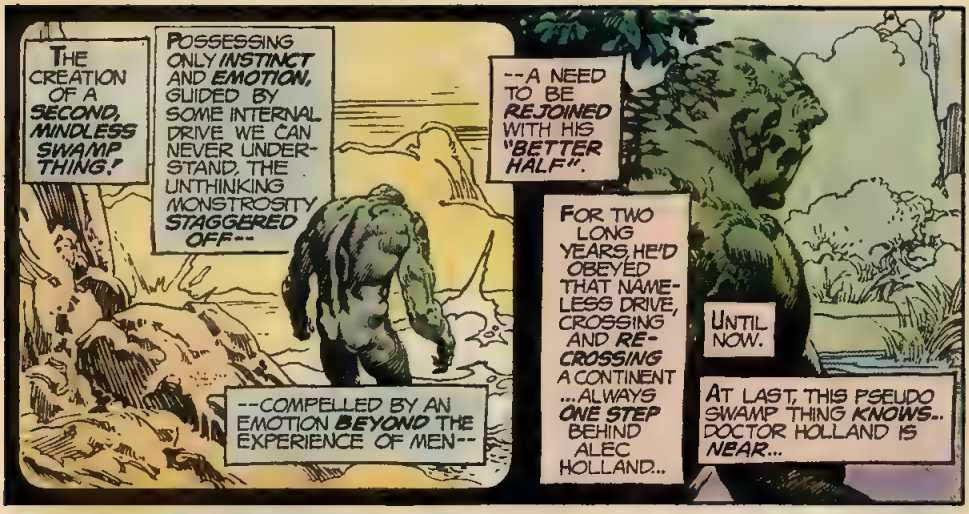
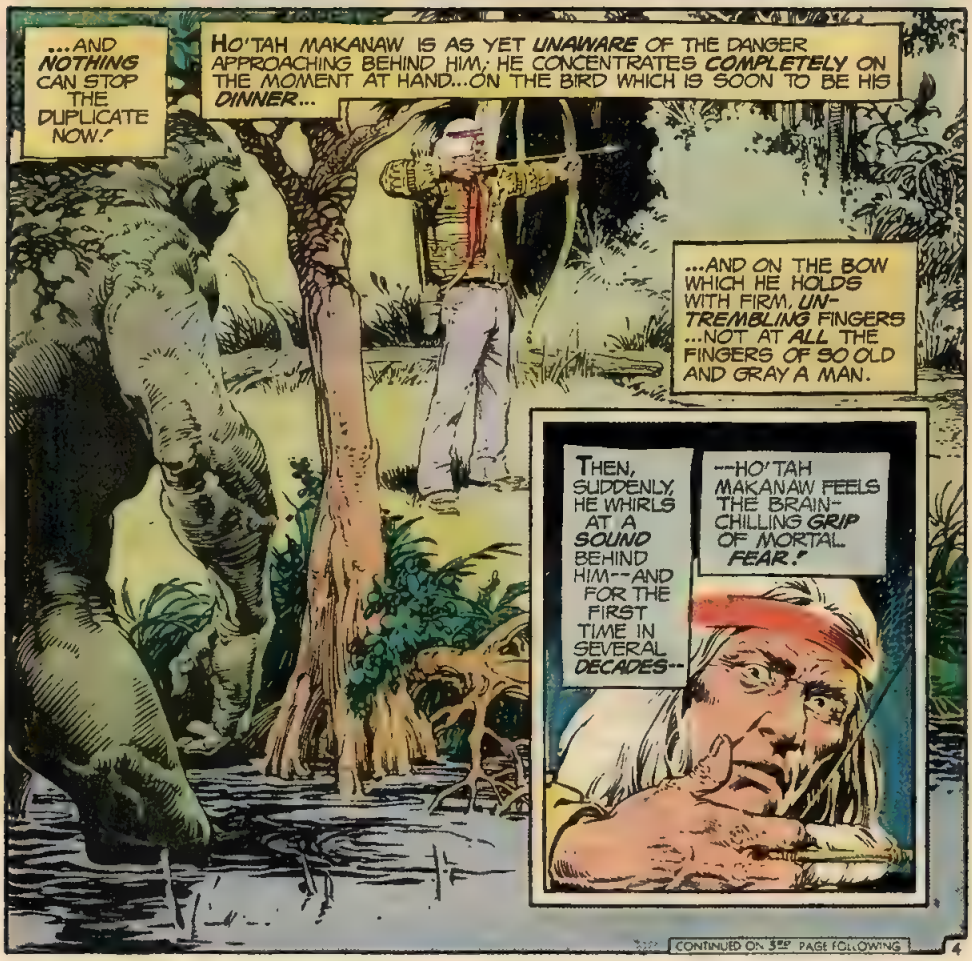

WITH SLOW, LEADEN STEPS, THIS MINDLESS CREATURE STAGGERS THROUGH THE DARKNESS, APPARENTLY DRAWN BY SOME INNER FORCE...
...GUIDED BY INSTINCT TOWARD A CONFRONTATION WITH... WHAT?
WITH THE PAST, PERHAPS? WHAT IS THIS CREATURE'S PAST?
WHERE DID IT COME FROM...
WHERE (IF THE WORD CAN BE USED) WAS THIS MONSTER ...BORN?
DIVINITY, MAINE; TWENTY-FOUR MONTHS AGO: ON A WINDSWEPT PRECIPICE OVERLOOKING A STORMY OCEAN, THREE STRANGE COMPANIONS FACED THE WRATH OF AN ANGRY TOWN...
THEY WERE: DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND, THE CHEMICALLY-TRANSFORMED MONSTROSITY KNOWN AS THE SWAMP THING... REBECCA RAVENWIND, CALLED A WITCH BY THE PEOPLE OF DIVINITY... AND TIMOTHY RAVENWIND, REBECCA'S BROTHER*...
* SHOWN IN COMPLETE DETAIL IN SWAMP THING #5. --EDITOR
WITHOUT WARNING, ONE OF THE TOWNSPEOPLE STRUCK. A MAN NAMED JOCKO LUNGED FORWARD AND SWUNG A DEADLY SCYTHE--
SWACT
--SEVERING THE SWAMP THING'S ARM--
--AND AROUSING THE MALFORMED MAN-MONSTER'S NOT-INCONSIDERABLE WRATH!
JOCKO'S CRIES OF AGONY CAUGHT THE INTEREST OF ALL CONCERNED--
--AND NO ONE NOTICED THE VINE-ENSNARLED ARM FALL TO THE ROCKS SEVERAL HUNDRED FEET BELOW THE CLIFF EDGE.


--A FALL THAT WAS SOON EMULATED BY THE SWAMP THING HIMSELF, WHEN A LEDGE OF LOOSE EARTH SUDDENLY GAVE WAY.
NOT LONG AFTER, A MOSSY CHUNK OF FLOTSAM WAS CAST VIOLENTLY UPON THE SHORE, SEVERAL HUNDRED YARDS FROM THE CLIFF-BASE...
FEEL LIKE...A USED SPONGE...! SO WEAK... MY ARMS CAN BARELY SUPPORT ME...!
MY ARMS...?
DEAR LORD... MY SEVERED ARM... HAS BEGUN TO GROW BACK...!
THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA... IN MY SYSTEM...! IN THE LAB... IT CAUSES RAPID REGENERATION ...OF PLANT-LIFE...
...AND PLANT-LIFE... IS EXACTLY... WHAT I'VE BECOME!
I'M WHOLE AGAIN... IN A MATTER... OF MINUTES...!
ALEC HOLLAND WENT ON TO AID REBECCA RAVENWIND AND HER BROTHER, BUT THE IMPORTANCE OF WHAT HAD OCCURRED WAS LOST ON HIM...
FOR, AT THAT MOMENT, AT THE BASE OF THE STORMY CLIFF--
--A SIMILAR REGENERATION WAS IN PROGRESS...
...A REGENERATION WHICH TOOK SEVERAL DAYS TO REACH COMPLETION...
...AND HAD A RATHER BIZARRE RESULT!


THE CREATION OF A SECOND, MINDLESS SWAMP THING!
POSSESSING ONLY INSTINCT AND EMOTION, GUIDED BY SOME INTERNAL DRIVE WE CAN NEVER UNDERSTAND, THE UNTHINKING MONSTROSITY STAGGERED OFF--
--COMPELLED BY AN EMOTION BEYOND THE EXPERIENCE OF MEN--
--A NEED TO BE REJOINED WITH HIS "BETTER HALF".
FOR TWO LONG YEARS, HE'D OBEYED THAT NAMELESS DRIVE, CROSSING AND RE-CROSSING A CONTINENT ...ALWAYS ONE STEP BEHIND ALEC HOLLAND...
UNTIL NOW.
AT LAST, THIS PSEUDO SWAMP THING KNOWS.. DOCTOR HOLLAND IS NEAR...


...AND NOTHING CAN STOP THE DUPLICATE NOW!
HO'TAH MAKANAW IS AS YET UNAWARE OF THE DANGER APPROACHING BEHIND HIM; HE CONCENTRATES COMPLETELY ON THE MOMENT AT HAND...ON THE BIRD WHICH IS SOON TO BE HIS DINNER...
...AND ON THE BOW WHICH HE HOLDS WITH FIRM, UN-TREMBLING FINGERS ...NOT AT ALL THE FINGERS OF SO OLD AND GRAY A MAN.
THEN, SUDDENLY, HE WHIRLS AT A SOUND BEHIND HIM--AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN SEVERAL DECADES--
--HO'TAH MAKANAW FEELS THE BRAIN-CHILLING GRIP OF MORTAL FEAR!

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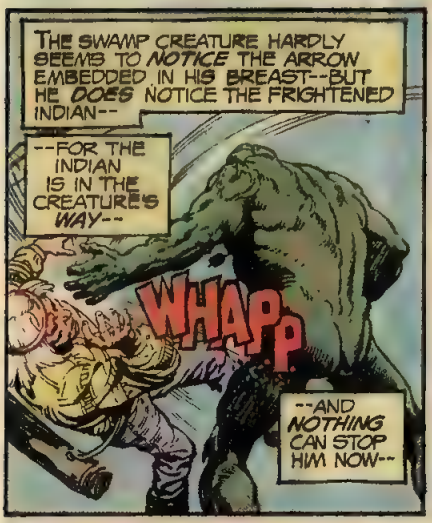
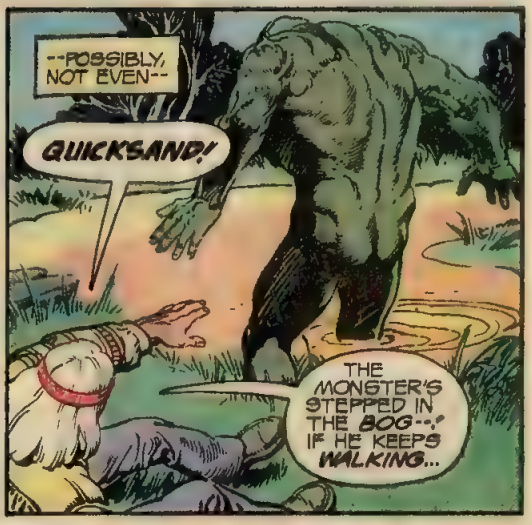
IT DRIVES HIM MOMENTARILY--INSANE.
SPIRIT OF MY FATHER!--A DEMON!
THWUNNK

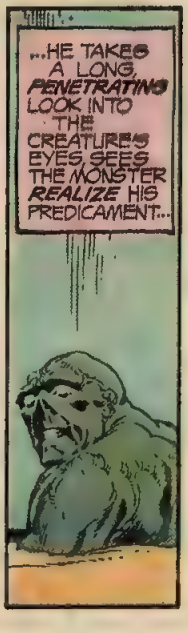

THE SWAMP CREATURE HARDLY SEEMS TO NOTICE THE ARROW EMBEDDED IN HIS BREAST--BUT HE DOES NOTICE THE FRIGHTENED INDIAN--
--FOR THE INDIAN IS IN THE CREATURE'S WAY--
WHAPP
--AND NOTHING CAN STOP HIM NOW--


--POSSIBLY, NOT EVEN--
QUICKSAND!
THE MONSTER'S STEPPED IN THE BOG--! IF HE KEEPS WALKING...

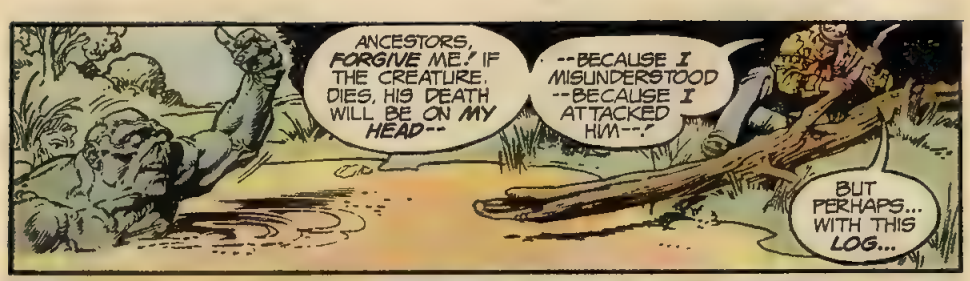
TRANSFIXED, HO'TAH WATCHES THE BRUTE SHAMBLE KNEE-DEEP INTO THE CLINGING BOG...

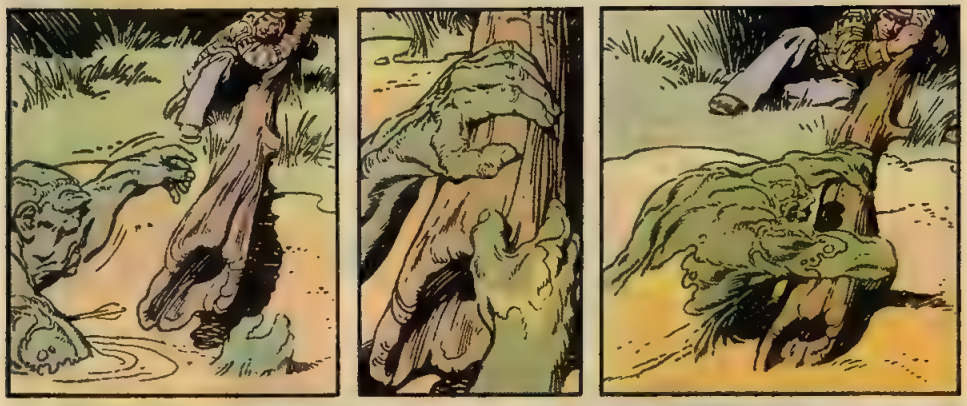
...WAIST-DEEP...

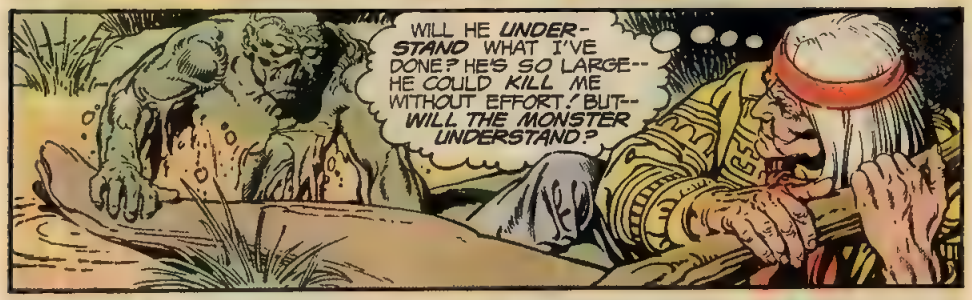
...AND AS HE WATCHES, THE MADNESS PASSES FROM HO'TAH MAKANAW...

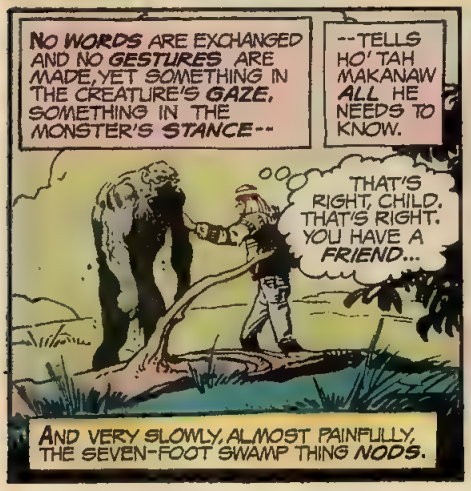

...HE TAKES A LONG, PENETRATING LOOK INTO THE CREATURE'S EYES, SEES THE MONSTER REALIZE HIS PREDICAMENT...

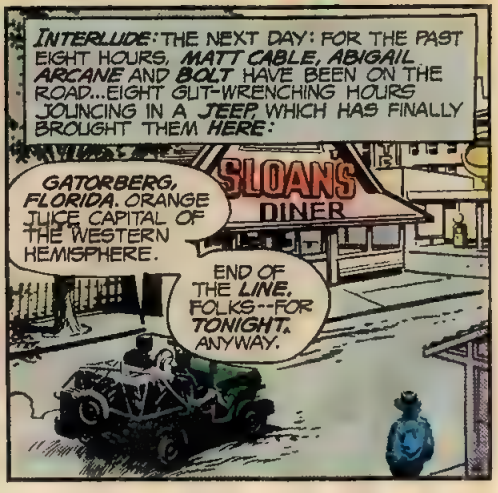
...AND UNDERSTANDS, WITH SUDDEN SICK HORROR:
IT'S A CHILD--A MINDLESS CHILD!

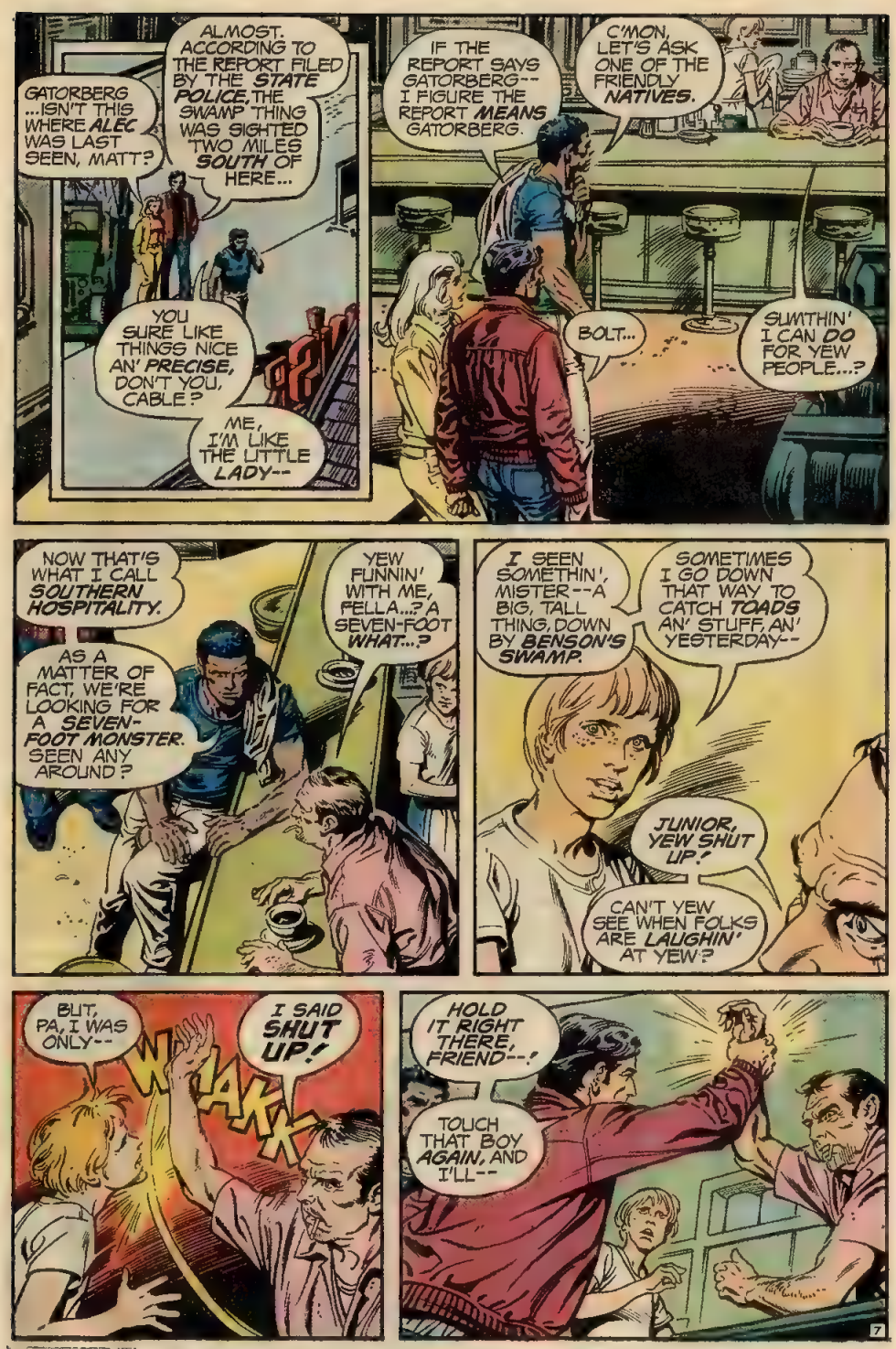

ANCESTORS, FORGIVE ME! IF THE CREATURE DIES, HIS DEATH WILL BE ON MY HEAD--
--BECAUSE I MISUNDERSTOOD --BECAUSE I ATTACKED HIM--!
BUT PERHAPS... WITH THIS LOG...

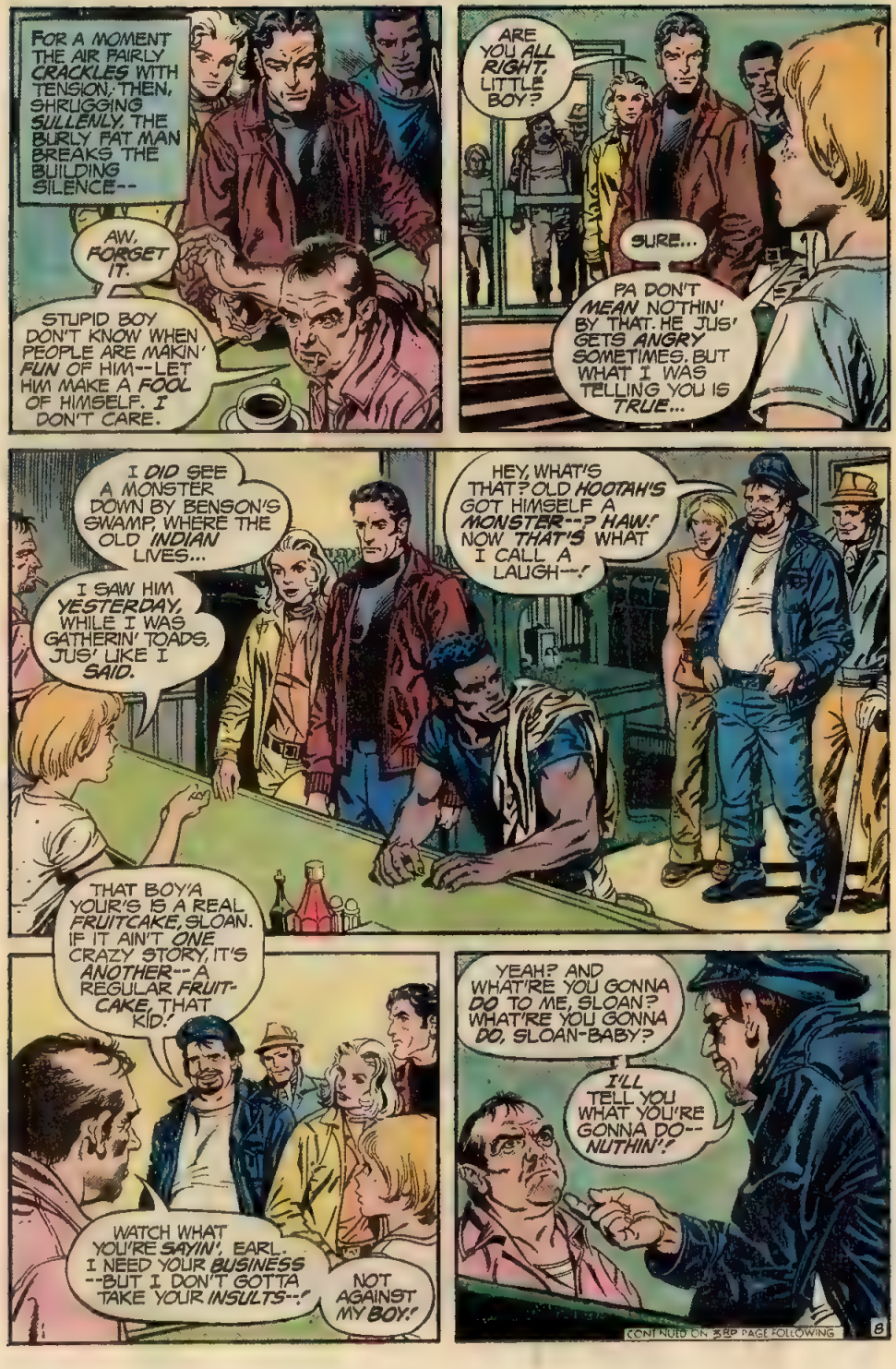



WILL HE UNDERSTAND WHAT I'VE DONE? HE'S SO LARGE-- HE COULD KILL ME WITHOUT EFFORT! BUT-- WILL THE MONSTER UNDERSTAND?


NO WORDS ARE EXCHANGED AND NO GESTURES ARE MADE, YET SOMETHING IN THE CREATURE'S GAZE, SOMETHING IN THE MONSTER'S STANCE--
--TELLS HO'TAH MAKANAW ALL HE NEEDS TO KNOW.
THAT'S RIGHT, CHILD. THAT'S RIGHT. YOU HAVE A FRIEND...
AND VERY SLOWLY, ALMOST PAINFULLY, THE SEVEN-FOOT SWAMP THING NODS.


INTERLUDE: THE NEXT DAY: FOR THE PAST EIGHT HOURS, MATT CABLE, ABIGAIL ARCANE AND BOLT HAVE BEEN ON THE ROAD...EIGHT GUT-WRENCHING HOURS JOUNCING IN A JEEP, WHICH HAS FINALLY BROUGHT THEM HERE:
GATORBERG, FLORIDA. ORANGE JUICE CAPITAL OF THE WESTERN HEMISPHERE.
SLOANS DINER
END OF THE LINE, FOLKS--FOR TONIGHT, ANYWAY.


GATORBERG ...ISN'T THIS WHERE ALEC WAS LAST SEEN, MATT?
ALMOST. ACCORDING TO THE REPORT FILED BY THE STATE POLICE, THE SWAMP THING WAS SIGHTED TWO MILES SOUTH OF HERE...
YOU SURE LIKE THINGS NICE AN' PRECISE, DON'T YOU, CABLE?
ME, I'M LIKE THE LITTLE LADY--
IF THE REPORT SAYS GATORBERG-- I FIGURE THE REPORT MEANS GATORBERG.
C'MON, LET'S ASK ONE OF THE FRIENDLY NATIVES.
BOLT...
SUMTHIN' I CAN DO FOR YEW PEOPLE...?
NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL SOUTHERN HOSPITALITY.
AS A MATTER OF FACT, WE'RE LOOKING FOR A SEVEN-FOOT MONSTER. SEEN ANY AROUND?
YEW FUNNIN' WITH ME, FELLA...? A SEVEN-FOOT WHAT...?
I SEEN SOMETHIN', MISTER--A BIG, TALL THING, DOWN BY BENSON'S SWAMP.
SOMETIMES I GO DOWN THAT WAY TO CATCH TOADS AN' STUFF, AN' YESTERDAY--
JUNIOR, YEW SHUT UP!
CAN'T YEW SEE WHEN FOLKS ARE LAUGHIN' AT YEW?
BUT, PA, I WAS ONLY--
I SAID SHUT UP!
WHAKK
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, FRIEND--!
TOUCH THAT BOY AGAIN, AND I'LL--
7


FOR A MOMENT THE AIR FAIRLY CRACKLES WITH TENSION; THEN, SHRUGGING SULLENLY, THE BURLY FAT MAN BREAKS THE BUILDING SILENCE--
AW, FORGET IT.
STUPID BOY DON'T KNOW WHEN PEOPLE ARE MAKIN' FUN OF HIM--LET HIM MAKE A FOOL OF HIMSELF. I DON'T CARE.
ARE YOU ALL RIGHT, LITTLE BOY?
SURE...
PA DON'T MEAN NOTHIN' BY THAT. HE JUS' GETS ANGRY SOMETIMES, BUT WHAT I WAS TELLING YOU IS TRUE...
I DID SEE A MONSTER DOWN BY BENSON'S SWAMP, WHERE THE OLD INDIAN LIVES...
I SAW HIM YESTERDAY, WHILE I WAS GATHERIN' TOADS, JUS' LIKE I SAID.
HEY, WHAT'S THAT? OLD HOOTAH'S GOT HIMSELF A MONSTER--? HAW! NOW THAT'S WHAT I CALL A LAUGH--!
THAT BOY'A YOURS IS A REAL FRUITCAKE, SLOAN. IF IT AIN'T ONE CRAZY STORY, IT'S ANOTHER-- A REGULAR FRUITCAKE, THAT KID!
WATCH WHAT YOU'RE SAYIN', EARL. I NEED YOUR BUSINESS --BUT I DON'T GOTTA TAKE YOUR INSULTS--!
NOT AGAINST MY BOY!
YEAH? AND WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO TO ME, SLOAN? WHAT'RE YOU GONNA DO, SLOAN-BABY?
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT YOU'RE GONNA DO-- NUTHIN'!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING
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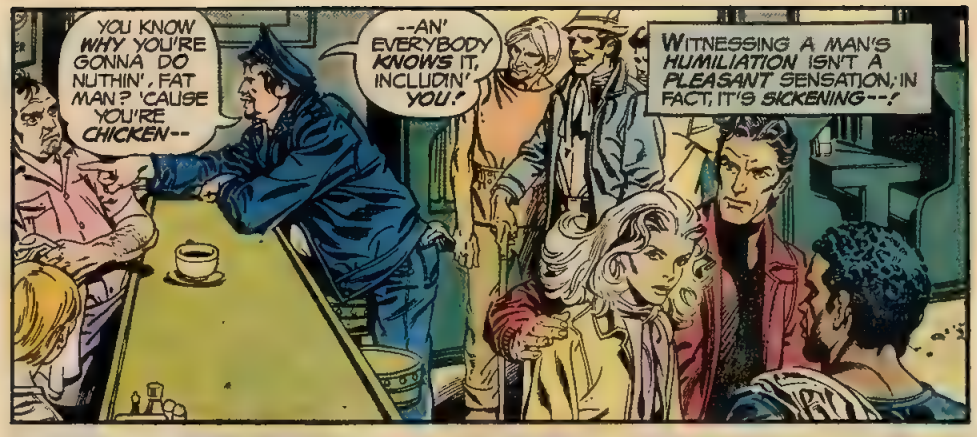
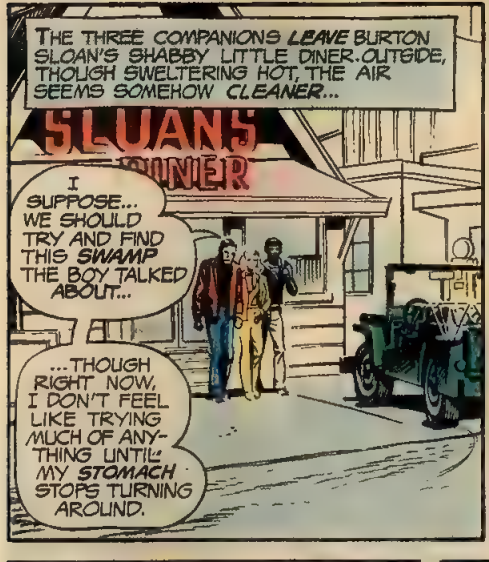
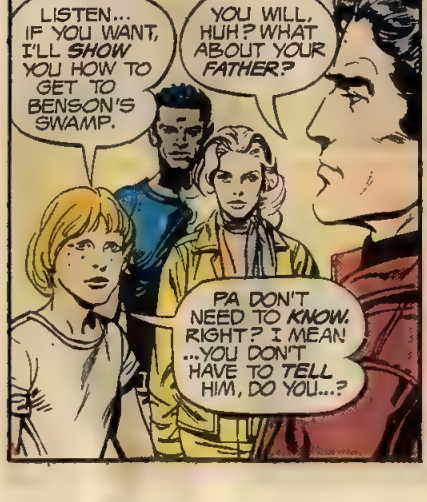
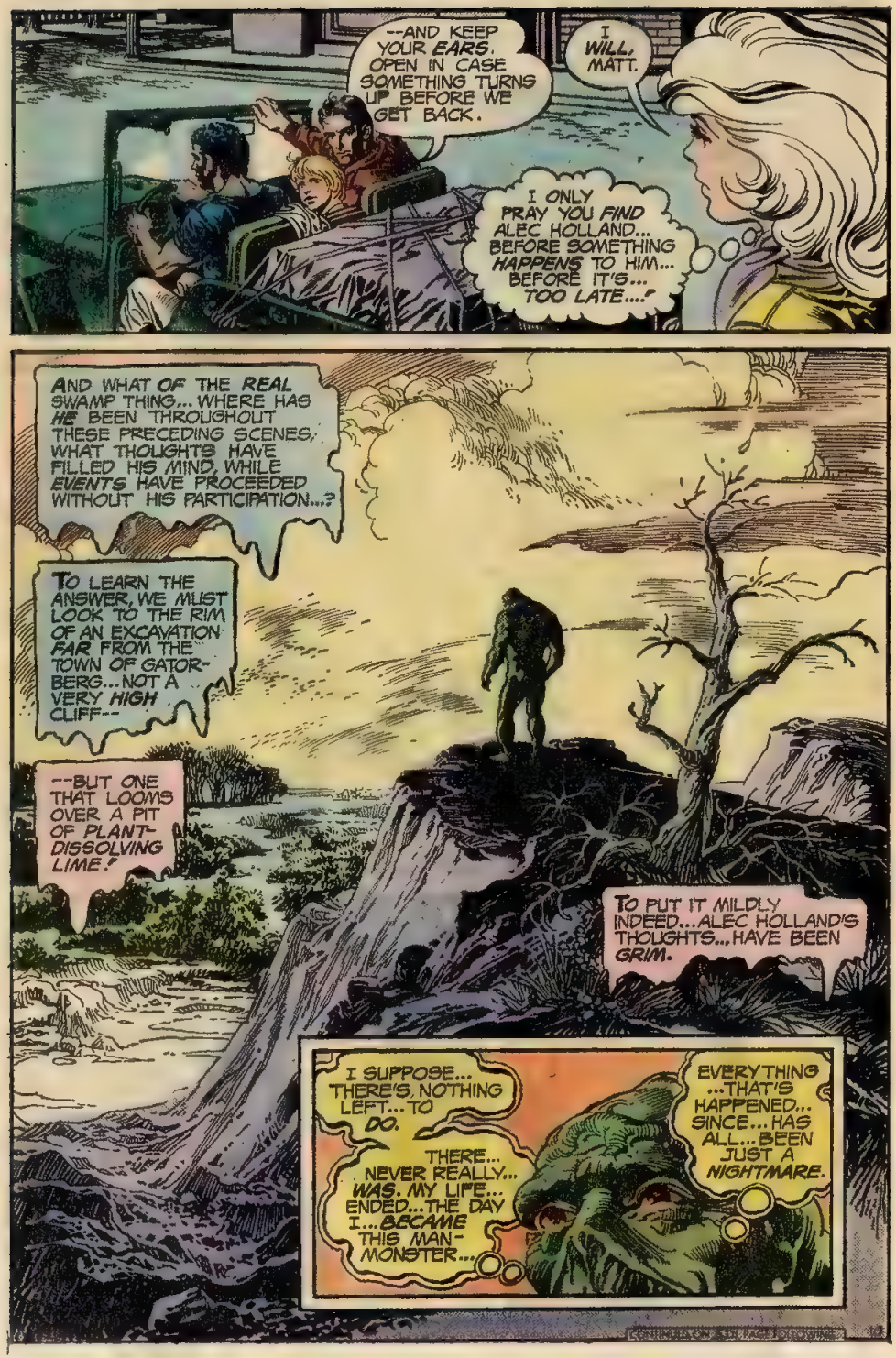

YOU KNOW WHY YOU'RE GONNA DO NUTHIN', FAT MAN? 'CAUSE YOU'RE CHICKEN--
--AN' EVERYBODY KNOWS IT, INCLUDIN' YOU!
WITNESSING A MAN'S HUMILIATION ISN'T A PLEASANT SENSATION; IN FACT, IT'S SICKENING--!


THE THREE COMPANIONS LEAVE BURTON SLOAN'S SHABBY LITTLE DINER. OUTSIDE, THOUGH SWELTERING HOT, THE AIR SEEMS SOMEHOW CLEANER...
SLOANS
I SUPPOSE... WE SHOULD TRY AND FIND THIS SWAMP THE BOY TALKED ABOUT...
...THOUGH RIGHT NOW, I DON'T FEEL LIKE TRYING MUCH OF ANYTHING UNTIL MY STOMACH STOPS TURNING AROUND.

MISTER? HEY, MISTER -- WAIT UP--!
EH?


LISTEN... IF YOU WANT, I'LL SHOW YOU HOW TO GET TO BENSON'S SWAMP.
YOU WILL, HUH? WHAT ABOUT YOUR FATHER?
PA DON'T NEED TO KNOW. RIGHT? I MEAN ...YOU DON'T HAVE TO TELL HIM, DO YOU...?

NO, SON--I GUESS WE DON'T.
WHAT DO YOU SAY, CABLE?
I SAY-- WE GO. IT'S OUR FIRST REAL LEAD IN A WEEK. WE CAN'T PASS UP THE CHANCE.
ABIGAIL, YOU STAY HERE-- REASSURE THE BOY'S FATHER--


--AND KEEP YOUR EARS, OPEN IN CASE SOMETHING TURNS UP BEFORE WE GET BACK.
I WILL, MATT.
I ONLY PRAY YOU FIND ALEC HOLLAND... BEFORE SOMETHING HAPPENS TO HIM... BEFORE IT'S... TOO LATE...!
AND WHAT OF THE REAL SWAMP THING... WHERE HAS HE BEEN THROUGHOUT THESE PRECEDING SCENES, WHAT THOUGHTS HAVE FILLED HIS MIND, WHILE EVENTS HAVE PROCEEDED WITHOUT HIS PARTICIPATION...?
TO LEARN THE ANSWER, WE MUST LOOK TO THE RIM OF AN EXCAVATION FAR FROM THE TOWN OF GATOR-BERG... NOT A VERY HIGH CLIFF--
--BUT ONE THAT LOOMS OVER A PIT OF PLANT-DISSOLVING LIME!
TO PUT IT MILDLY INDEED... ALEC HOLLAND'S THOUGHTS... HAVE BEEN GRIM.
I SUPPOSE... THERE'S NOTHING LEFT... TO DO.
THERE... NEVER REALLY... WAS. MY LIFE... ENDED... THE DAY I... BECAME THIS MAN-MONSTER...
EVERYTHING ...THAT'S HAPPENED... SINCE... HAS ALL... BEEN JUST A NIGHTMARE.
CONTINUED ON THE BACK COVER

ONCE... I BELIEVED... I MIGHT FIND... A WAY TO REVERSE... THE TRANS-FORMATION.
NOW ...THAT HOPE... IS DEAD...
...IF IT EVER... REALLY EXISTED.
ALL I'D REALLY... LIKE TO KNOW... IS WHY.
...WHY DID I... HAVE TO CHANGE? WHY... COULDN'T I... HAVE DIED...
...WHEN LINDA DIED...?
WHY COULDN'T ...I HAVE HAD... PEACE... INSTEAD OF LIVING ON... LIKE SOME SORT OF BAD JOKE... ENDLESSLY REPEATED...
EH?
STRANGE... TINGLING SENSATION...
WHAT ON EARTH...?
IT'S... AS THOUGH... SOMETHING WERE TUGGING AT ME...
...LIKE IRON... TO A MAGNET...!
...UNCANNY... NEVER... FELT ANYTHING LIKE... IT... BEFORE...!
...CAN'T RESIST...
WHAT-EVER... OR WHOEVER IT... IS...
...IT'S GOT ME... COMPLETELY ...UNDER CONTROL...!
NOT FAR FROM THE CLIFF WHERE THE SWAMP THING HAS BEEN BROODING, MEN AND MACHINERY OCCUPY A LARGE CLEARING, SITE OF A GOVERNMENT EXCAVATION...
THE EXACT PURPOSE OF THIS PARTICULAR GOVERNMENT EXCAVATION ISN'T CLEAR TO THE ENGINEERS WORKING THE PROJECT...
...BUT THEY DOUBT IT'S IMPORTANT...

...GOVERNMENT EXCAVATIONS RARELY ARE.
DIG THE HOLES AN' FILL 'EM IN. SOME JOB FOR A COLLEGE GRADUATE, EH, MR. HALSTON?
AT LEAST YOU'RE WORKING, SMITH. DON'T COMPLAIN.
THINK WE'LL HAVE THIS DIG FINISHED BY TOMORROW?
SURE, IF WE WORK OVERTIME. BUT WHY BOTHER? WE'LL ONLY BE ASSIGNED TO FILL THE HOLE IN AGAIN NEXT MONTH, SO--
YAAAAH
SMITH-- WHAT--?
A MONSTER-- SOME SORT OF FREAKIN' MONSTER!
I'M GETTIN' OUT OF HERE-- PRONTO!
GOOD LORD!
...CAN'T... CONTROL MYSELF...OR I'D HAVE... NEVER COME NEAR...THIS PLACE...
ROARING AND SNARLING LIKE SOME BEAST AWAKENED FROM A PEACEFUL SLUMBER, THE THIRTEEN-TON BULLDOZER GRINDS INTO LIFE--
--AND WHETHER BY CHANCE OR INTENTION, RUMBLES ACROSS THE MUDDY CLEARING DIRECTLY TOWARD A LUMBERING MAN-BRUTE--
RARRRRARRRAARAAAAA
--WHO STRAINS AGAINST THE INVISIBLE FORCE DRAWING HIM FORWARD...
--STRAINS--
--AND FOR JUST AN INSTANT--
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING
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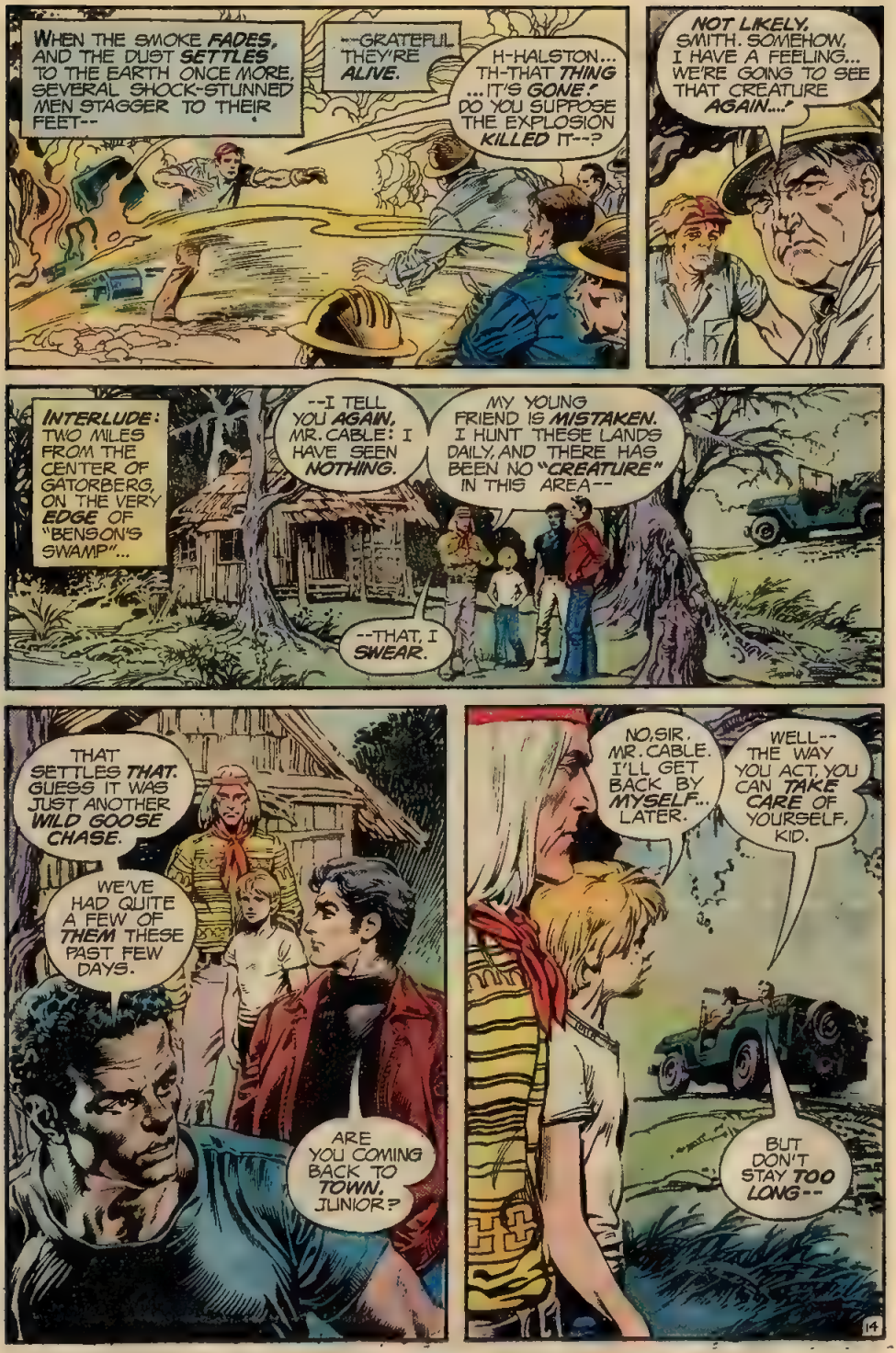
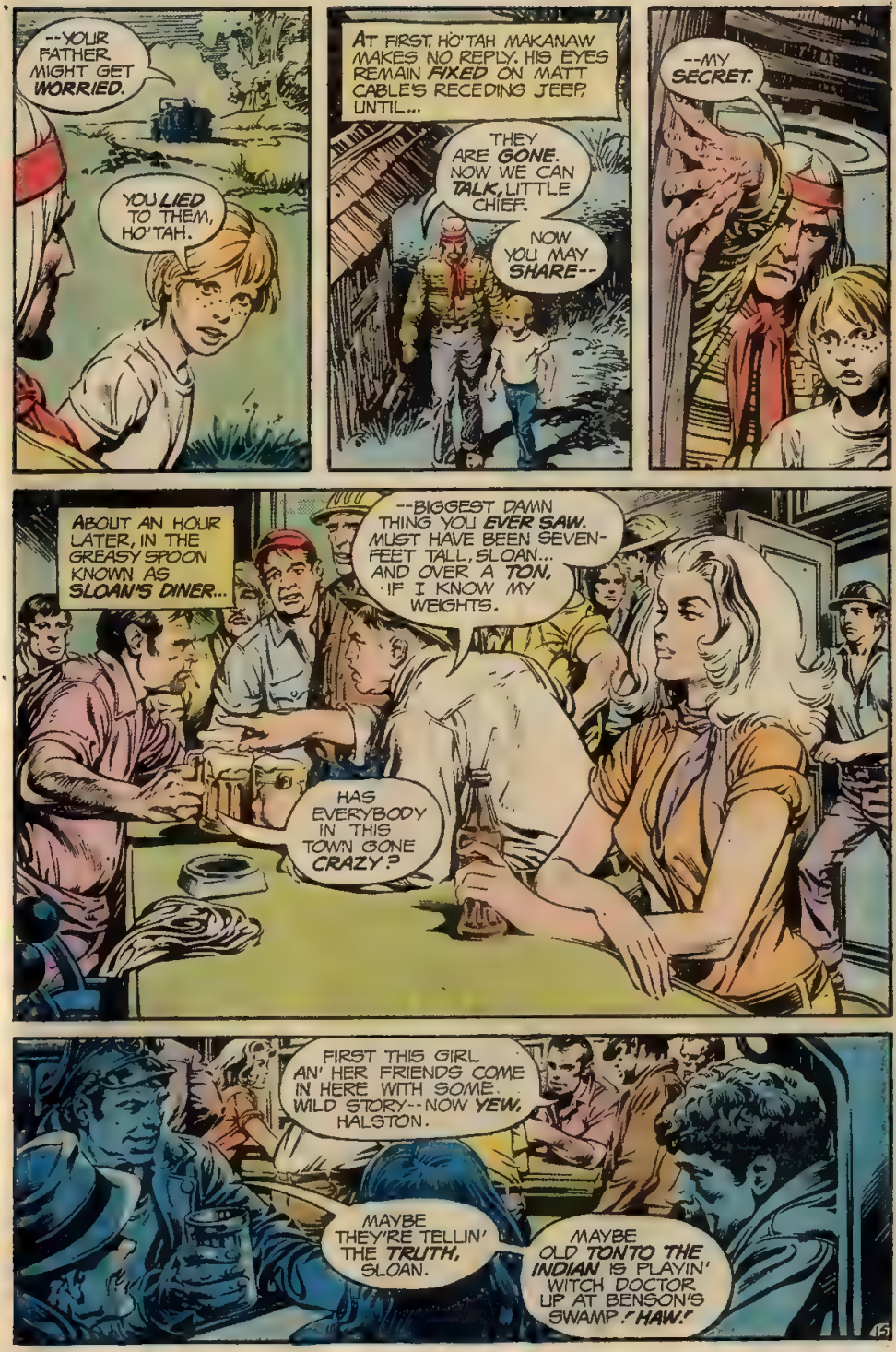
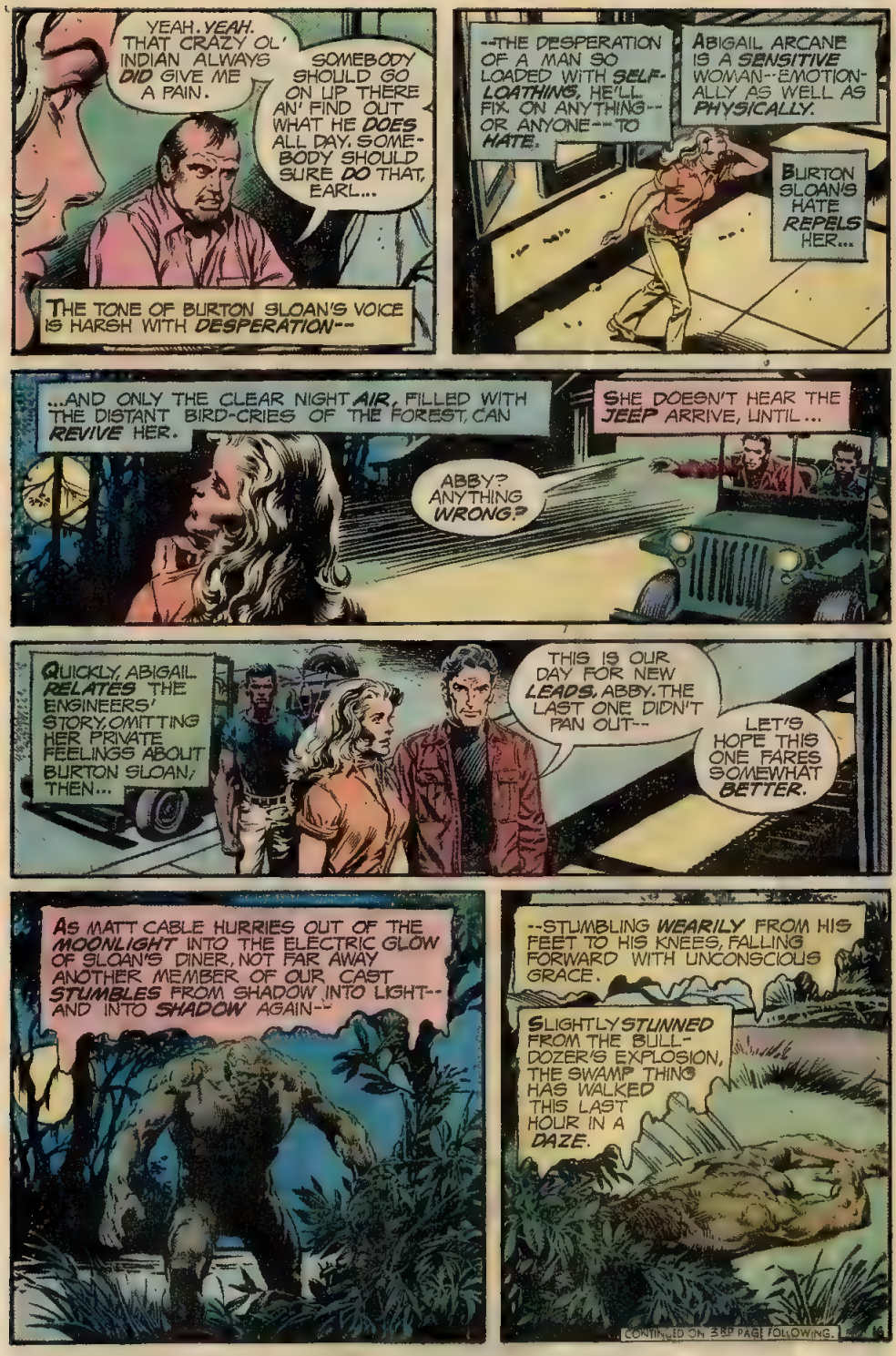
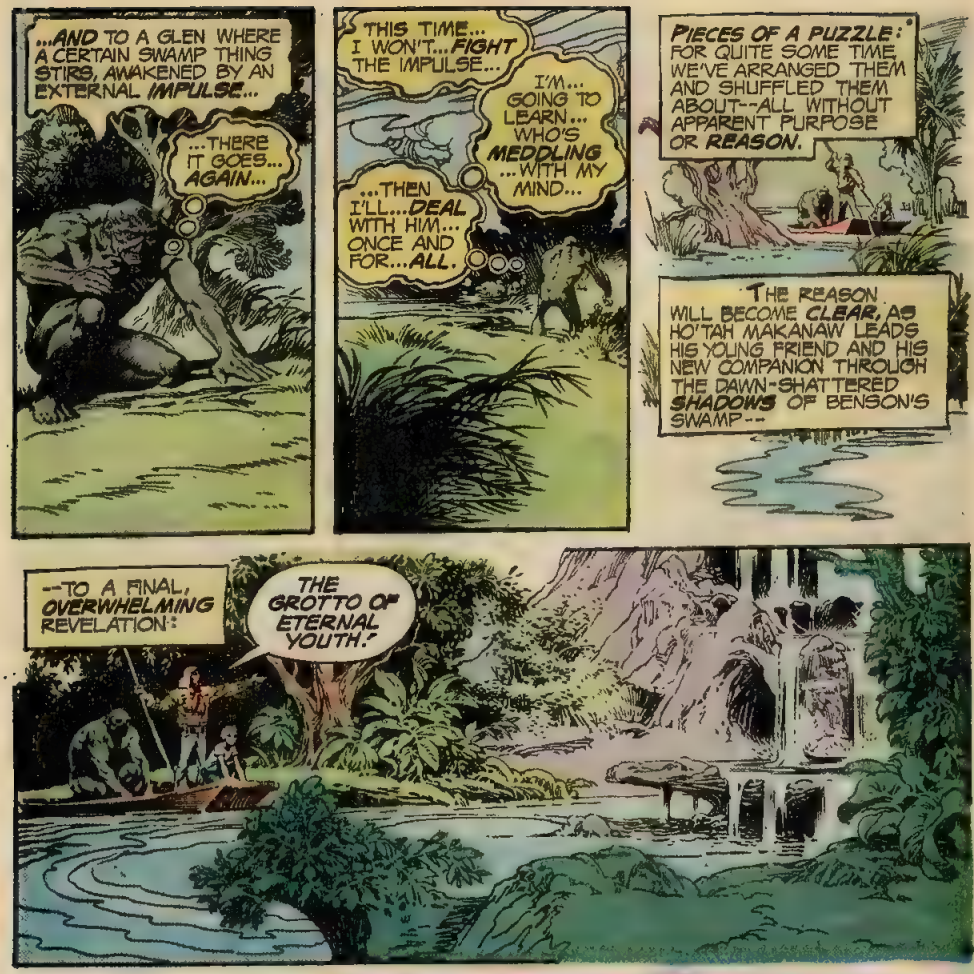
--BREAKS FREE!
THAT DOZER... MOVING TOO QUICKLY...! DRIVER... MUST HAVE PANICKED...
CAN'T STOP... THE DOZER...
...SO I'LL HAVE... TO STOP... THE DRIVER...!
...BEFORE THE DRIVER... STOPS ME!
YEEEOOWW
STUPID...! FORGOT... THE GAS TANK...!
...WHEN IT CRASHES... THE DOZER WILL...
EXPLODE!
BBWHUMMP!


WHEN THE SMOKE FADES, AND THE DUST SETTLES TO THE EARTH ONCE MORE, SEVERAL SHOCK-STUNNED MEN STAGGER TO THEIR FEET--
--GRATEFUL THEY'RE ALIVE.
H-HALSTON... TH-THAT THING ...IT'S GONE! DO YOU SUPPOSE THE EXPLOSION KILLED IT--?
NOT LIKELY, SMITH. SOMEHOW, I HAVE A FEELING... WE'RE GOING TO SEE THAT CREATURE AGAIN...!
INTERLUDE: TWO MILES FROM THE CENTER OF GATORBERG, ON THE VERY EDGE OF "BENSON'S SWAMP"...
--I TELL YOU AGAIN, MR. CABLE: I HAVE SEEN NOTHING.
MY YOUNG FRIEND IS MISTAKEN. I HUNT THESE LANDS DAILY, AND THERE HAS BEEN NO "CREATURE" IN THIS AREA--
--THAT, I SWEAR.
THAT SETTLES THAT. GUESS IT WAS JUST ANOTHER WILD GOOSE CHASE.
WE'VE HAD QUITE A FEW OF THEM THESE PAST FEW DAYS.
ARE YOU COMING BACK TO TOWN, JUNIOR?
NO, SIR, MR. CABLE. I'LL GET BACK BY MYSELF... LATER.
WELL-- THE WAY YOU ACT, YOU CAN TAKE CARE OF YOURSELF, KID.
BUT DON'T STAY TOO LONG--
14


--YOUR FATHER MIGHT GET WORRIED.
YOU LIED TO THEM, HO'TAH.
AT FIRST, HO'TAH MAKANAW MAKES NO REPLY. HIS EYES REMAIN FIXED ON MATT CABLE'S RECEDING JEEP, UNTIL...
THEY ARE GONE. NOW WE CAN TALK, LITTLE CHIEF.
NOW YOU MAY SHARE--
--MY SECRET.
ABOUT AN HOUR LATER, IN THE GREASY SPOON KNOWN AS SLOAN'S DINER...
--BIGGEST DAMN THING YOU EVER SAW. MUST HAVE BEEN SEVEN-FEET TALL, SLOAN... AND OVER A TON, IF I KNOW MY WEIGHTS.
HAS EVERYBODY IN THIS TOWN GONE CRAZY?
FIRST THIS GIRL AN' HER FRIENDS COME IN HERE WITH SOME WILD STORY--NOW YEW, HALSTON.
MAYBE THEY'RE TELLIN' THE TRUTH, SLOAN.
MAYBE OLD TONTO THE INDIAN IS PLAYIN' WITCH DOCTOR UP AT BENSON'S SWAMP! HAW!


YEAH. YEAH. THAT CRAZY OL' INDIAN ALWAYS DID GIVE ME A PAIN.
SOMEBODY SHOULD GO ON UP THERE AN' FIND OUT WHAT HE DOES ALL DAY. SOMEBODY SHOULD SURE DO THAT, EARL...
THE TONE OF BURTON SLOAN'S VOICE IS HARSH WITH DESPERATION--
--THE DESPERATION OF A MAN SO LOADED WITH SELF-LOATHING, HE'LL FIX ON ANYTHING--OR ANYONE--TO HATE.
ABIGAIL ARCANE IS A SENSITIVE WOMAN--EMOTIONALLY AS WELL AS PHYSICALLY.
BURTON SLOAN'S HATE REPELS HER...
...AND ONLY THE CLEAR NIGHT AIR, FILLED WITH THE DISTANT BIRD-CRIES OF THE FOREST, CAN REVIVE HER.
ABBY? ANYTHING WRONG?
SHE DOESN'T HEAR THE JEEP ARRIVE, UNTIL...
QUICKLY, ABIGAIL RELATES THE ENGINEERS' STORY, OMITTING HER PRIVATE FEELINGS ABOUT BURTON SLOAN; THEN...
THIS IS OUR DAY FOR NEW LEADS, ABBY. THE LAST ONE DIDN'T PAN OUT--
LET'S HOPE THIS ONE FARES SOMEWHAT BETTER.
AS MATT CABLE HURRIES OUT OF THE MOONLIGHT INTO THE ELECTRIC GLOW OF SLOAN'S DINER, NOT FAR AWAY ANOTHER MEMBER OF OUR CAST STUMBLES FROM SHADOW INTO LIGHT--AND INTO SHADOW AGAIN--
--STUMBLING WEARILY FROM HIS FEET TO HIS KNEES, FALLING FORWARD WITH UNCONSCIOUS GRACE.
SLIGHTLY STUNNED FROM THE BULLDOZER'S EXPLOSION, THE SWAMP THING HAS WALKED THIS LAST HOUR IN A DAZE.
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

NOW HIS BODY WILL NO LONGER WORK; IT WILL NO LONGER ANSWER HIS COMMANDS--
--NEVER MIND THE COMMANDS OF ANOTHER CONTROL.
INSTEAD, THE SWAMP THING WILL SLEEP, SO NEAR TO HIS FRIENDS, YET SO FAR...
AND WHAT OF THE CONTROLLER? WHAT OF HE WHO SUMMONS THE SWAMP THING, MINDLESSLY... INSTINCTIVELY?
TH-THIS... THIS IS YOUR SECRET? THE MONSTER...?
LITTLE CHIEF, HE'S NOT A MONSTER. HAVEN'T I TAUGHT YOU THESE PAST MONTHS--
--A MAN MUST NOT BE JUDGED BY HIS COLOR OR HIS RACE. HE MUST NOT BE JUDGED BY HIS APPEARANCE.
SUCH IS THE WHITE MAN'S CURSE, LITTLE CHIEF--TO HATE BECAUSE OF A MAN'S BODY, NOT BECAUSE OF HIS SOUL--!
YOU MUST NEVER FALL PREY TO THAT SICKNESS.
AS YOU GROW OLDER, YOU WILL UNDERSTAND WHAT I HAVE UNDERSTOOD--HATRED CONSUMES THOSE WHO HATE, AS WELL AS THE HATED--!
SUCH HATRED WAS WHAT DROVE MY PEOPLE FROM THIS LAND IN THE 1840s.
WE WERE THE SEMINOLE, A GREAT NATION--AND THE WHITE MAN CRUSHED US, BECAUSE HE LUSTED FOR OUR LAND!
AND TO EXPLAIN HIS GREED HE FOUND US STRANGE.' HE STOLE OUR LAND AND PUSHED US NORTHWEST--
--OUT OF FLORIDA, INTO THE WESTERN STATES, WHERE WE LANGUISHED AND DIED.
YOU TOLD ME THAT BEFORE, HO'TAH--BUT WHEN YOU TALK, IT'S LIKE YOU WUZ REMEMBERING IT--
--NOT JUST TELLIN' A STORY.
REALLY? HOW ODD. COME, LITTLE CHIEF... PERHAPS IT'S TIME WE ATE...
MORNING COMES, SLEEK AND WARM, A PINK SKY TURNING BLUE AS THE SUN RISES ABOVE THE HORIZON, SPREADING LIGHT ACROSS THE WORLD...
...TO A GLADE WHERE HEAVY MACHINERY SNARLS INTO OPERATION...

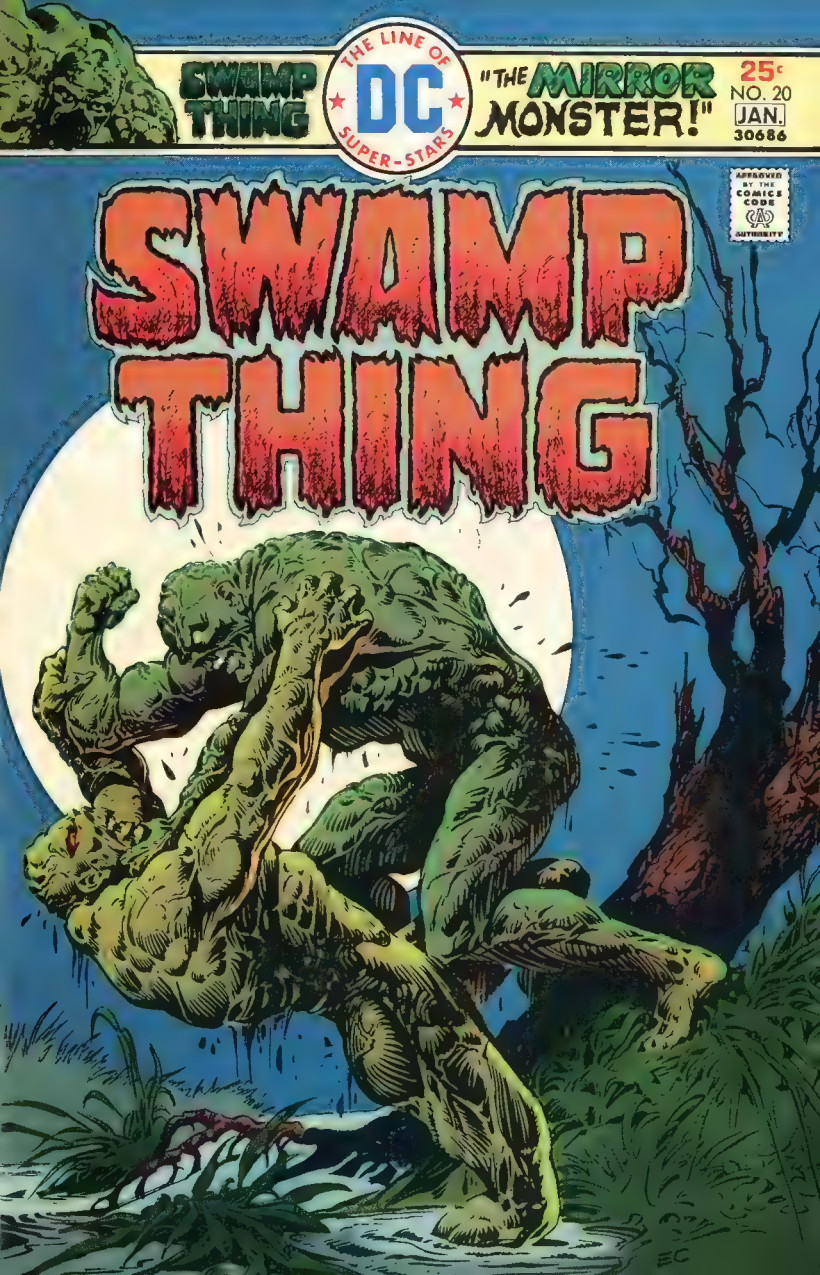

...AND TO A GLEN WHERE A CERTAIN SWAMP THING STIRS, AWAKENED BY AN EXTERNAL IMPULSE...
...THERE IT GOES... AGAIN...
THIS TIME... I WON'T... FIGHT THE IMPULSE...
I'M... GOING TO LEARN... WHO'S MEDDLING ...WITH MY MIND...
...THEN I'LL... DEAL WITH HIM... ONCE AND FOR... ALL.
PIECES OF A PUZZLE: FOR QUITE SOME TIME, WE'VE ARRANGED THEM AND SHUFFLED THEM ABOUT--ALL WITHOUT APPARENT PURPOSE OR REASON.
THE REASON WILL BECOME CLEAR, AS HO'TAH MAKANAW LEADS HIS YOUNG FRIEND AND HIS NEW COMPANION THROUGH THE DAWN-SHATTERED SHADOWS OF BENSON'S SWAMP--
--TO A FINAL, OVERWHELMING REVELATION:
THE GROTTO OF ETERNAL YOUTH!

SORRY TO STOP HERE, GANG--BUT THIS STORY WAS PLANNED TO RUN 25 PAGES IN A 50¢ GIANT ISSUE, AND AT THE LAST MINUTE WE DECIDED TO GO ALL-NEW, AND KEEP THE MAG AT 25¢

SO WATCH FOR THE NEXT ISSUE OF SWAMP THING FOR:

THE MIRROR MONSTER!

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE SECOND WEEK IN SEPTEMBER


SWAMP THING
THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
"THE MIRROR MONSTER!"
25¢
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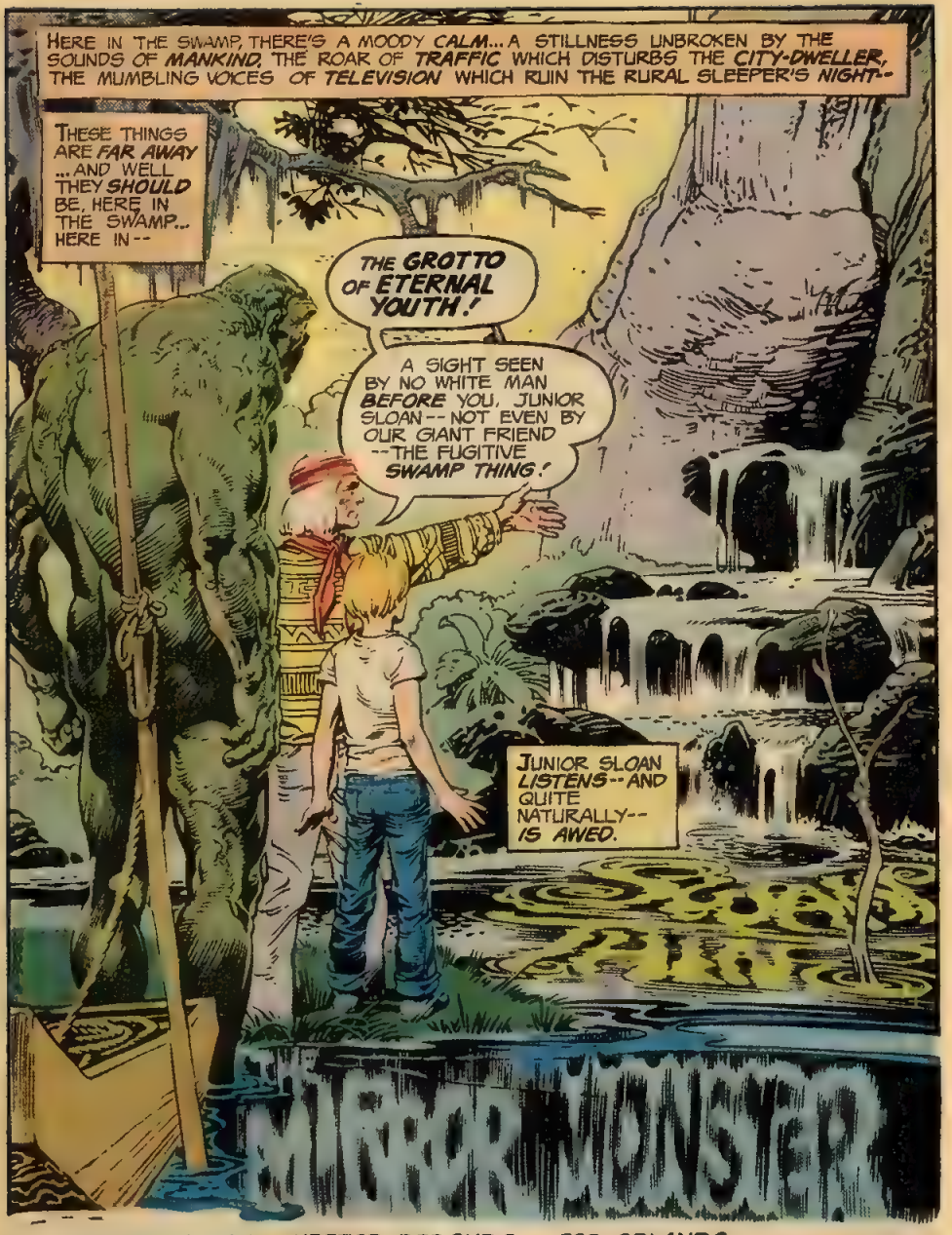
SWAMP THING


HERE IN THE SWAMP, THERE'S A MOODY CALM... A STILLNESS UNBROKEN BY THE SOUNDS OF MANKIND, THE ROAR OF TRAFFIC WHICH DISTURBS THE CITY-DWELLER, THE MUMBLING VOICES OF TELEVISION WHICH RUIN THE RURAL SLEEPER'S NIGHT--
THESE THINGS ARE FAR AWAY ...AND WELL THEY SHOULD BE, HERE IN THE SWAMP... HERE IN --
THE GROTTO OF ETERNAL YOUTH!
A SIGHT SEEN BY NO WHITE MAN BEFORE YOU, JUNIOR SLOAN -- NOT EVEN BY OUR GIANT FRIEND --THE FUGITIVE SWAMP THING!
JUNIOR SLOAN LISTENS -- AND QUITE NATURALLY -- IS AWED.
MIRROR MONSTER

A GERRY CONWAY (WRITER) * NESTOR REDONDO (ARTIST) * JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION

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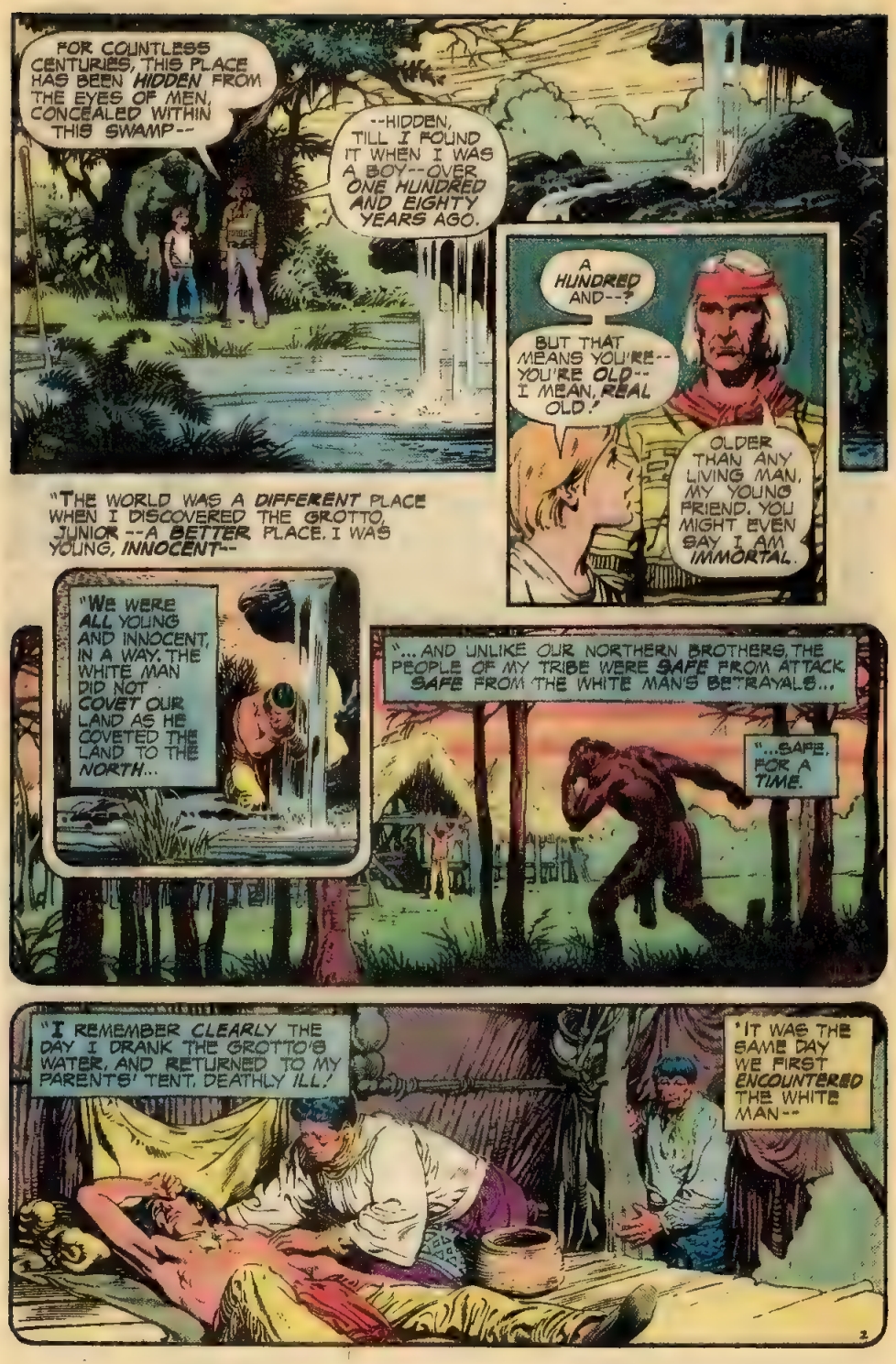
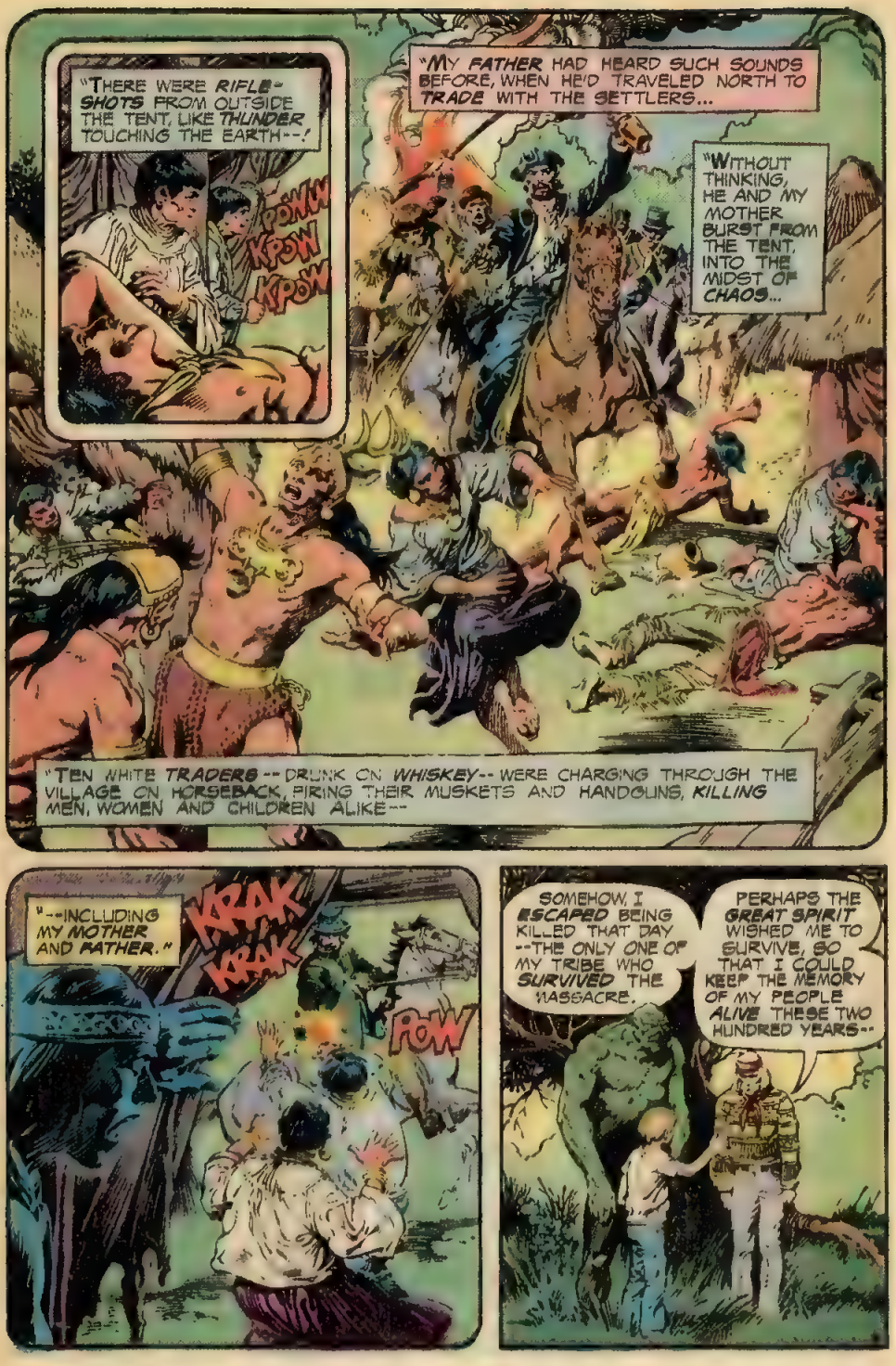
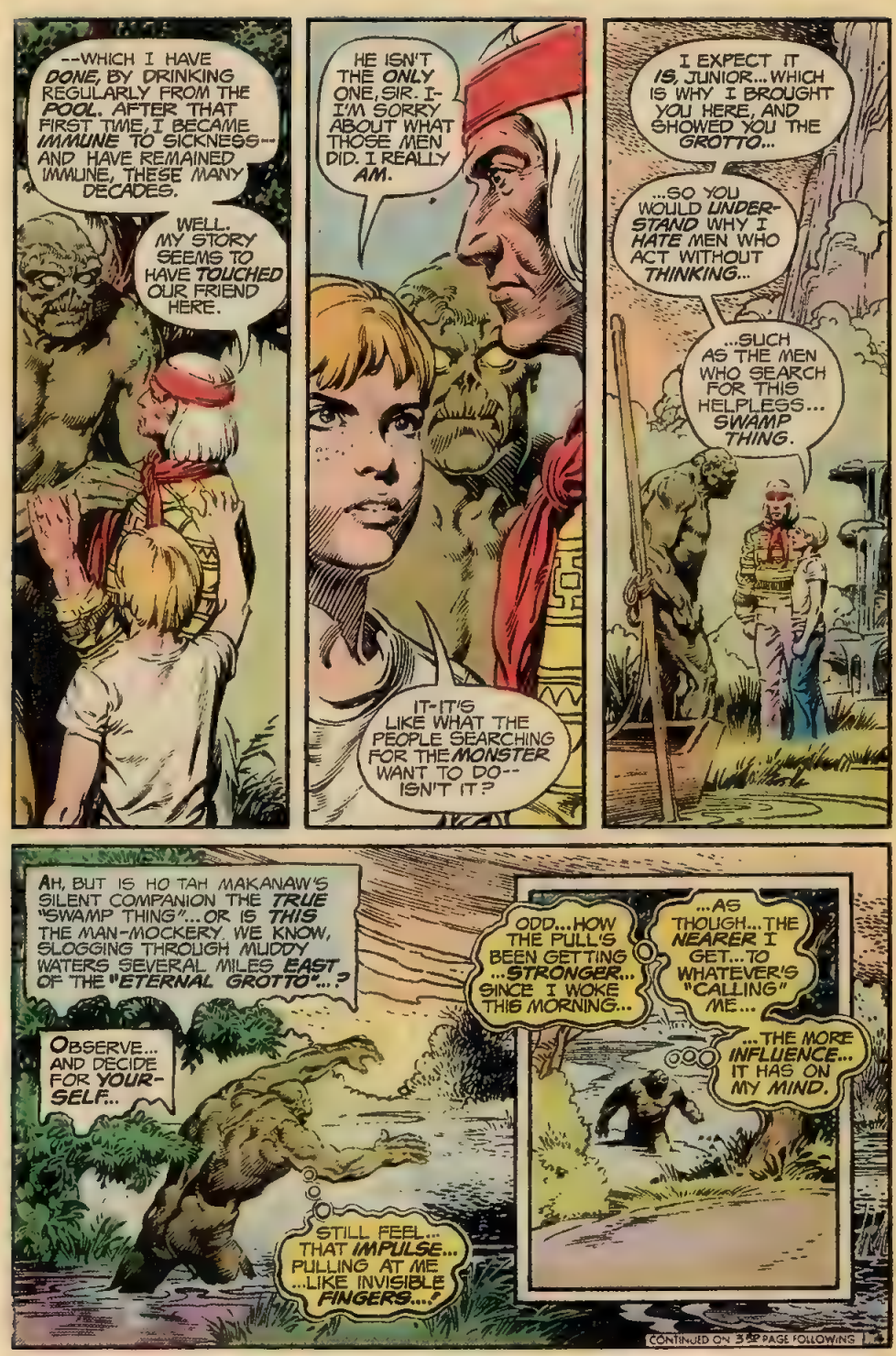

FOR COUNTLESS CENTURIES, THIS PLACE HAS BEEN HIDDEN FROM THE EYES OF MEN, CONCEALED WITHIN THIS SWAMP--
--HIDDEN, TILL I FOUND IT WHEN I WAS A BOY--OVER ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY YEARS AGO.
A HUNDRED AND--?
BUT THAT MEANS YOU'RE--YOU'RE OLD--I MEAN, REAL OLD!
OLDER THAN ANY LIVING MAN, MY YOUNG FRIEND. YOU MIGHT EVEN SAY I AM IMMORTAL.
"THE WORLD WAS A DIFFERENT PLACE WHEN I DISCOVERED THE GROTTO, JUNIOR--A BETTER PLACE. I WAS YOUNG, INNOCENT--
"WE WERE ALL YOUNG AND INNOCENT, IN A WAY. THE WHITE MAN DID NOT COVET OUR LAND AS HE COVETED THE LAND TO THE NORTH...
"... AND UNLIKE OUR NORTHERN BROTHERS, THE PEOPLE OF MY TRIBE WERE SAFE FROM ATTACK. SAFE FROM THE WHITE MAN'S BETRAYALS...
"...SAFE, FOR A TIME.
"I REMEMBER CLEARLY THE DAY I DRANK THE GROTTO'S WATER, AND RETURNED TO MY PARENTS' TENT, DEATHLY ILL!
"IT WAS THE SAME DAY WE FIRST ENCOUNTERED THE WHITE MAN--

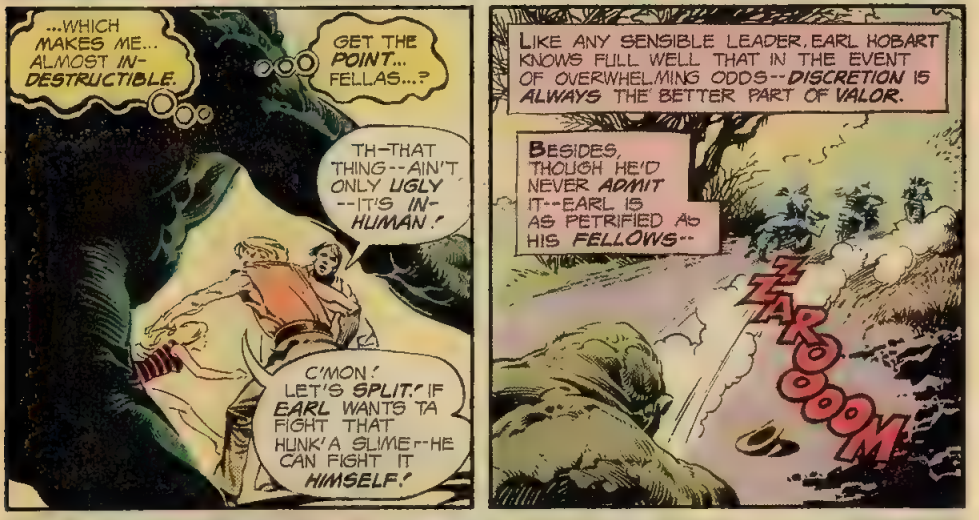

"THERE WERE RIFLE-SHOTS FROM OUTSIDE THE TENT, LIKE THUNDER TOUCHING THE EARTH--!
KPOW
KPOW
KPOW
"MY FATHER HAD HEARD SUCH SOUNDS BEFORE, WHEN HE'D TRAVELED NORTH TO TRADE WITH THE SETTLERS...
"WITHOUT THINKING, HE AND MY MOTHER BURST FROM THE TENT, INTO THE MIDST OF CHAOS...
"TEN WHITE TRADERS -- DRUNK ON WHISKEY -- WERE CHARGING THROUGH THE VILLAGE ON HORSEBACK, FIRING THEIR MUSKETS AND HANDGUNS, KILLING MEN, WOMEN AND CHILDREN ALIKE--
"--INCLUDING MY MOTHER AND FATHER."
KRAK
KRAK
POW
SOMEHOW, I ESCAPED BEING KILLED THAT DAY --THE ONLY ONE OF MY TRIBE WHO SURVIVED THE MASSACRE.
PERHAPS THE GREAT SPIRIT WISHED ME TO SURVIVE, SO THAT I COULD KEEP THE MEMORY OF MY PEOPLE ALIVE THESE TWO HUNDRED YEARS--

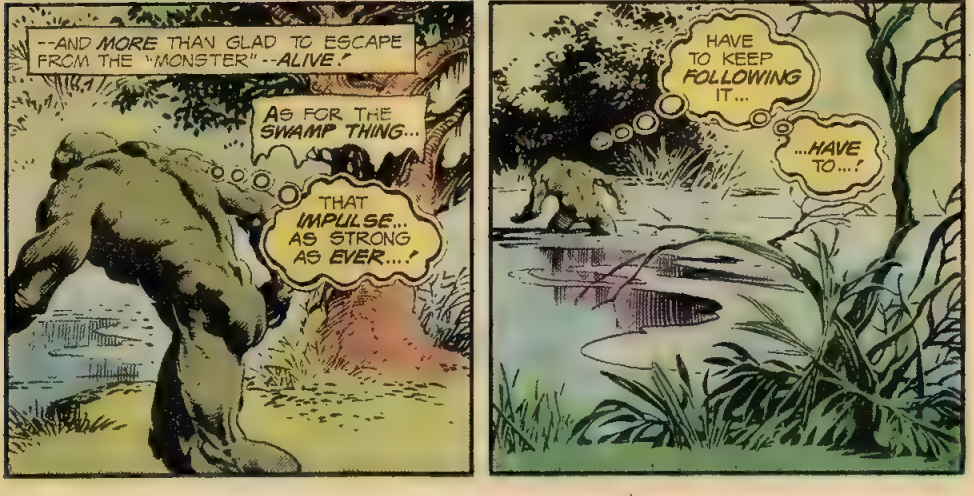

--WHICH I HAVE DONE, BY DRINKING REGULARLY FROM THE POOL. AFTER THAT FIRST TIME, I BECAME IMMUNE TO SICKNESS--AND HAVE REMAINED IMMUNE, THESE MANY DECADES.
WELL. MY STORY SEEMS TO HAVE TOUCHED OUR FRIEND HERE.
HE ISN'T THE ONLY ONE, SIR. I-I'M SORRY ABOUT WHAT THOSE MEN DID. I REALLY AM.
IT-IT'S LIKE WHAT THE PEOPLE SEARCHING FOR THE MONSTER WANT TO DO--ISN'T IT?
I EXPECT IT IS, JUNIOR... WHICH IS WHY I BROUGHT YOU HERE, AND SHOWED YOU THE GROTTO...
...SO YOU WOULD UNDERSTAND WHY I HATE MEN WHO ACT WITHOUT THINKING...
...SUCH AS THE MEN WHO SEARCH FOR THIS HELPLESS... SWAMP THING.
AH, BUT IS HO TAH MAKANAW'S SILENT COMPANION THE TRUE "SWAMP THING"...OR IS THIS THE MAN-MOCKERY, WE KNOW, SLOGGING THROUGH MUDDY WATERS SEVERAL MILES EAST OF THE "ETERNAL GROTTO"...?
OBSERVE... AND DECIDE FOR YOURSELF...
STILL FEEL... THAT IMPULSE... PULLING AT ME. ...LIKE INVISIBLE FINGERS...!
ODD...HOW THE PULL'S BEEN GETTING ...STRONGER... SINCE I WOKE THIS MORNING...
...AS THOUGH...THE NEARER I GET...TO WHATEVER'S "CALLING" ME...
...THE MORE INFLUENCE... IT HAS ON MY MIND.
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

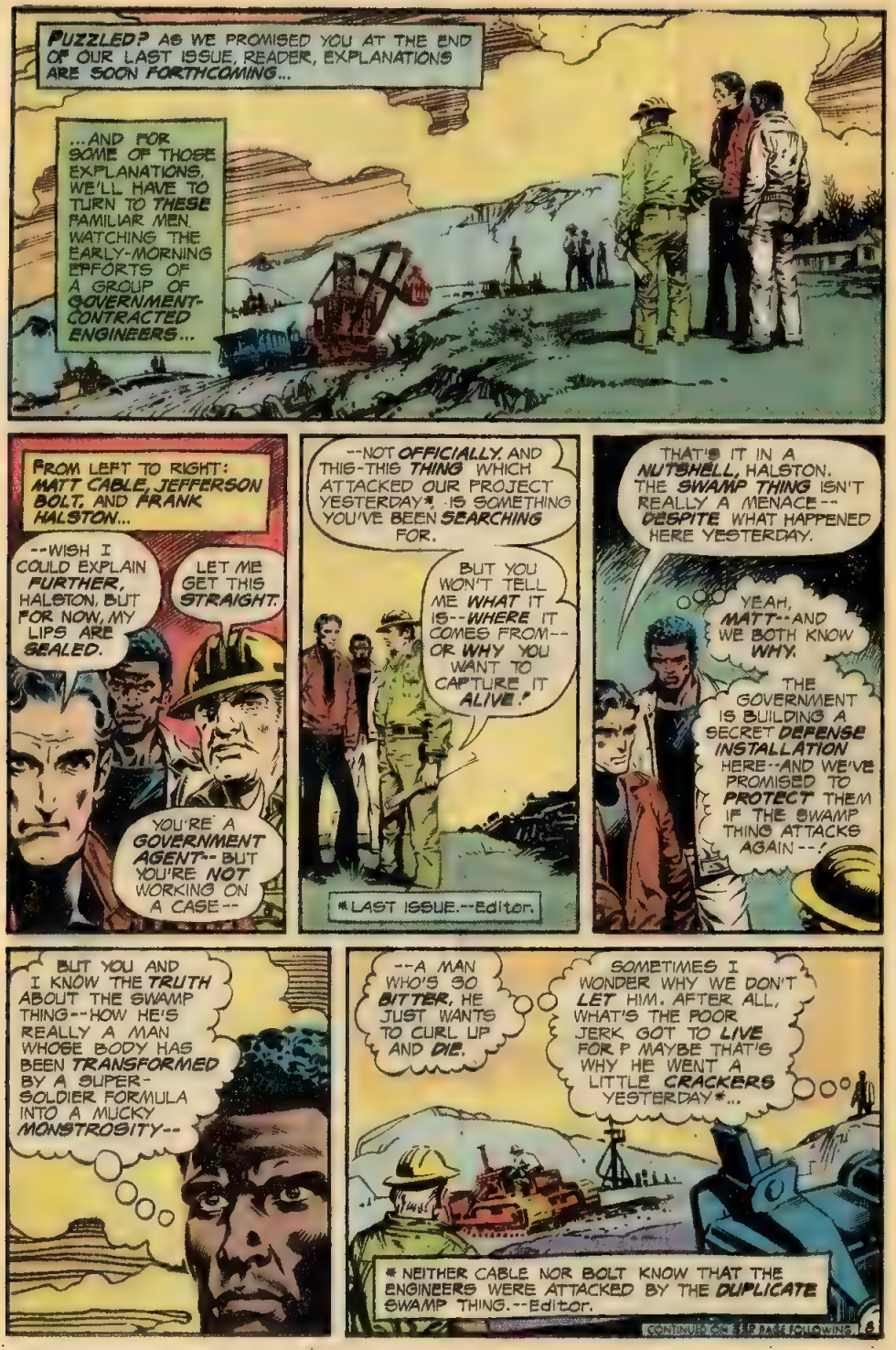
THIS TIME... I'M GOING TO LET... THE IMPULSE LEAD ME... TO WHOEVER IS MEDDLING WITH MY MIND...
EH...? MOTOR-CYCLES...?
RRAAAMBLEEE
EARL HOBART IS NOT A VERY INTELLIGENT MAN, AND LIKE MANY STUPID MEN, HIS IMAGINATION IS SOMEWHAT LIMITED.
FOR THE PAST TWENTY YEARS, HE'D LIVED A LIFE OF UNREALITY--PRETENDING THAT THE WORLD STOPPED IN 1956, WHEN HE BOUGHT HIS FIRST BIKE.
THIS MORNING, HE'S ABOUT TO DISCOVER THAT THE WORLD HASN'T STOPPED--
--THOUGH AS FAR AS EARL IS CONCERNED, IT MIGHT AS WELL HAVE!
MOTHER OF MERCY! SOME KINDA MONSTER--!
YEEEEOW!
EEEEEEE
FOR THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED SWAMP THING, THE SCENE IS ONE HE KNOWS ALL TOO WELL--!
IT'S THE ARCH-TYPICAL MOMENT WHEN HYSTERIA AND FEAR UNITE TO BECOME VIOLENCE AND DEATH.
GET 'IM! GET THAT THING--
--BEFORE HE GETS US!
BUT INSTEAD OF TERROR THE MONSTROUS CREATURE WHO WAS ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND FEELS ONLY--REGRET.

WITHOUT THOUGHT, WITHOUT REASON, THE BIKERS OBEY THEIR LEADER-- AND LIKE A MOTLEY ARMY, THEY ATTACK-- CHAINS CUTTING THE AIR, KNIVES SLASHING DEEP INTO MOSSY HIDE--!
I DON'T... WANT... THIS FIGHT...! IT'S WRONG... INSANE...!
I HAVE TO...FOLLOW THE IMPULSE ...I KEEP FEELING...BUT THESE FOOLS... ARE IN MY WAY!
MUST ...MOVE QUICKLY... STOP THIS... FAST...!
BUT, BEFORE THE SEVEN-FOOT PLANT CREATURE CAN MOVE...
UHHHH...ONE OF THEM...ON MY BACK...! CUTTING...MY ARM...!
JUST BECAUSE... MY PLANT BODY CAN'T FEEL... PAIN...
...DOESN'T MEAN...I'LL LET THIS CREEP... USE ME FOR A PIN-CUSHION!
EARL! EARL, HE'S GOT ME--!
HE'S GOT MEEEEEEEEE-- EERRKK!

IT STILL... SHOCKS ME... TO REALIZE HOW HARD IT IS... FOR THIS CHANGED BODY OF MINE ...TO BE HURT...!
LIKE A PLANT... I REGROW WHATEVER'S CUT OFF ME...
...LIKE THE TIME I... LOST MY ARM*...
*SWAMP THING #3. --Editor.
MY BODY... REGENERATES LOST TISSUE...
...AND ANYTHING I LOSE... I GET BACK...

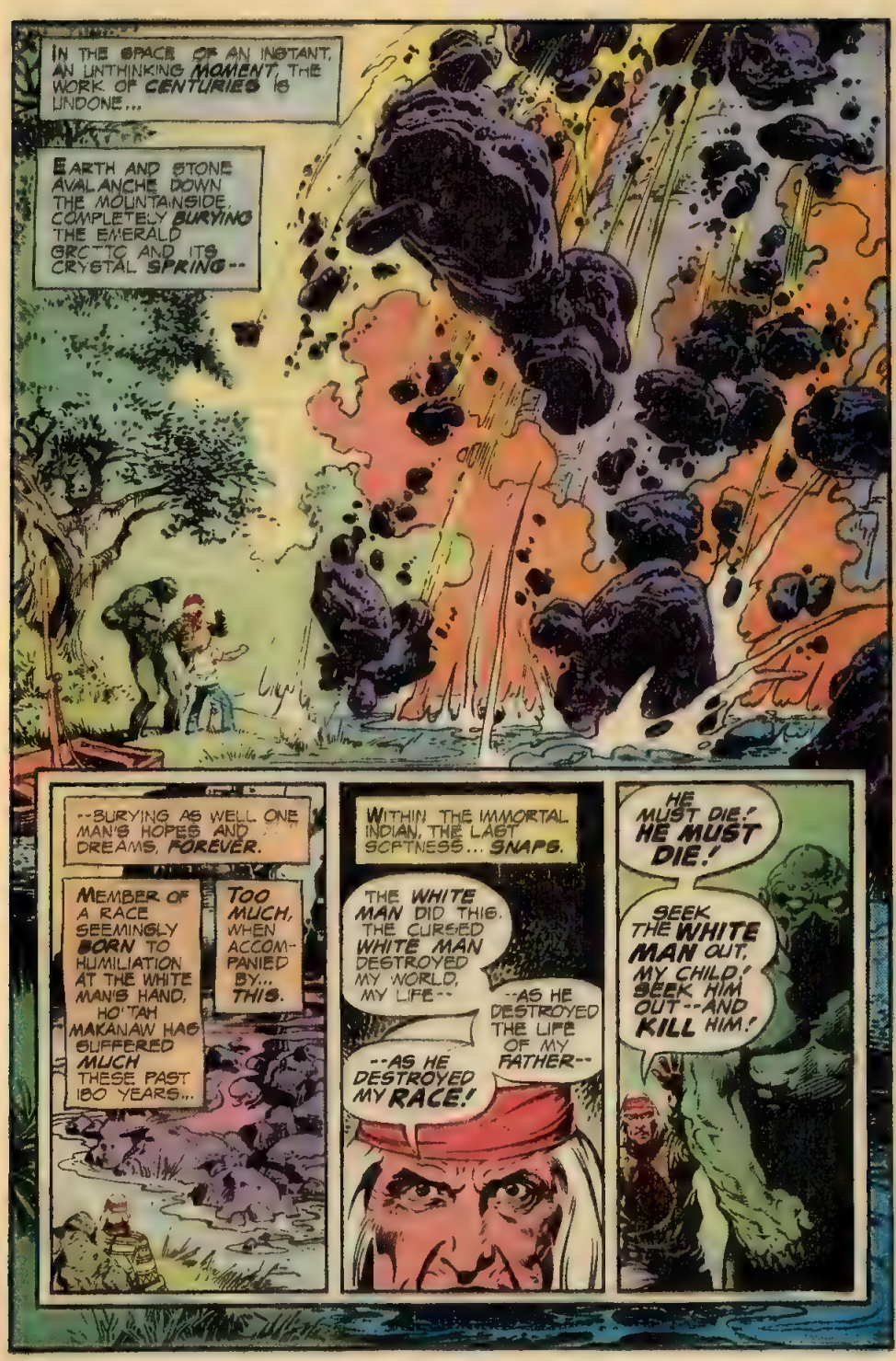

...WHICH MAKES ME... ALMOST IN-DESTRUCTIBLE.
GET THE POINT... FELLAS...?
TH-THAT THING--AIN'T ONLY UGLY --IT'S IN-HUMAN!
C'MON! LET'S SPLIT! IF EARL WANTS TA FIGHT THAT HUNK'A SLIME--HE CAN FIGHT IT HIMSELF!
LIKE ANY SENSIBLE LEADER, EARL HOBART KNOWS FULL WELL THAT IN THE EVENT OF OVERWHELMING ODDS--DISCRETION IS ALWAYS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR.
BESIDES, THOUGH HE'D NEVER ADMIT IT--EARL IS AS PETRIFIED AS HIS FELLOWS--
ZZAKOOOM

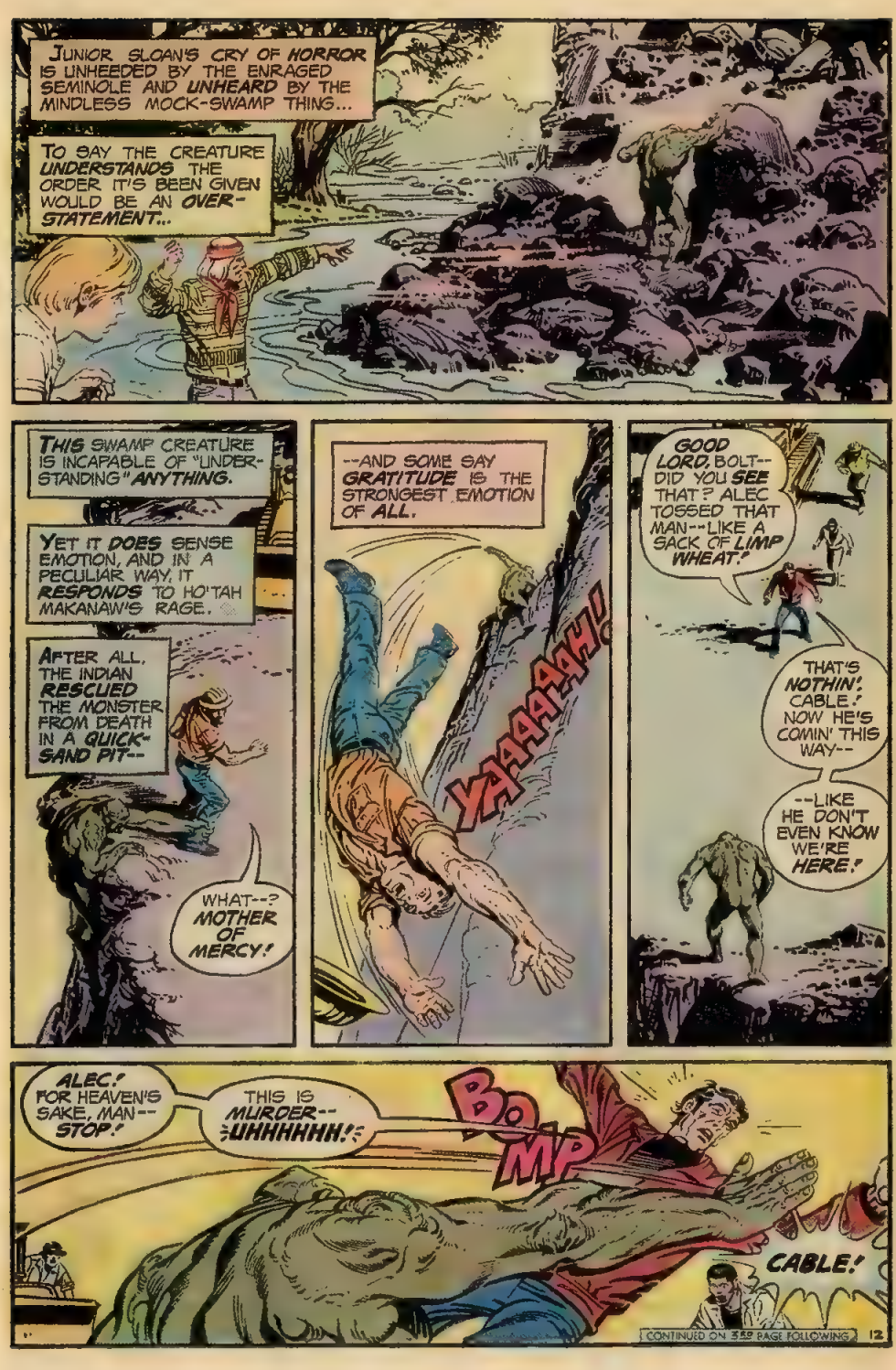

--AND MORE THAN GLAD TO ESCAPE FROM THE "MONSTER"--ALIVE!
AS FOR THE SWAMP THING...
THAT IMPULSE... AS STRONG AS EVER...!
HAVE TO KEEP FOLLOWING IT...
...HAVE TO...!


PUZZLED? AS WE PROMISED YOU AT THE END OF OUR LAST ISSUE, READER, EXPLANATIONS ARE SOON FORTHCOMING...
...AND FOR SOME OF THOSE EXPLANATIONS, WE'LL HAVE TO TURN TO THESE FAMILIAR MEN, WATCHING THE EARLY-MORNING EFFORTS OF A GROUP OF GOVERNMENT-CONTRACTED ENGINEERS...
FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: MATT CABLE, JEFFERSON BOLT, AND FRANK HALSTON...
--WISH I COULD EXPLAIN FURTHER, HALSTON, BUT FOR NOW, MY LIPS ARE SEALED.
LET ME GET THIS STRAIGHT.
YOU'RE A GOVERNMENT AGENT--BUT YOU'RE NOT WORKING ON A CASE--
--NOT OFFICIALLY, AND THIS-THIS THING WHICH ATTACKED OUR PROJECT YESTERDAY*, IS SOMETHING YOU'VE BEEN SEARCHING FOR.
BUT YOU WON'T TELL ME WHAT IT IS--WHERE IT COMES FROM--OR WHY YOU WANT TO CAPTURE IT ALIVE!
*LAST ISSUE.--Editor.
THAT'S IT IN A NUTSHELL, HALSTON. THE SWAMP THING ISN'T REALLY A MENACE--DESPITE WHAT HAPPENED HERE YESTERDAY.
YEAH, MATT--AND WE BOTH KNOW WHY.
THE GOVERNMENT IS BUILDING A SECRET DEFENSE INSTALLATION HERE--AND WE'VE PROMISED TO PROTECT THEM IF THE SWAMP THING ATTACKS AGAIN--!
BUT YOU AND I KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT THE SWAMP THING--HOW HE'S REALLY A MAN WHOSE BODY HAS BEEN TRANSFORMED BY A SUPER-SOLDIER FORMULA INTO A MUCKY MONSTROSITY--
--A MAN WHO'S SO BITTER, HE JUST WANTS TO CURL UP AND DIE.
SOMETIMES I WONDER WHY WE DON'T LET HIM. AFTER ALL, WHAT'S THE POOR JERK GOT TO LIVE FOR? MAYBE THAT'S WHY HE WENT A LITTLE CRACKERS YESTERDAY*...
* NEITHER CABLE NOR BOLT KNOW THAT THE ENGINEERS WERE ATTACKED BY THE DUPLICATE SWAMP THING.--Editor.
CONTINUED ON 8TH PAGE FOLLOWING

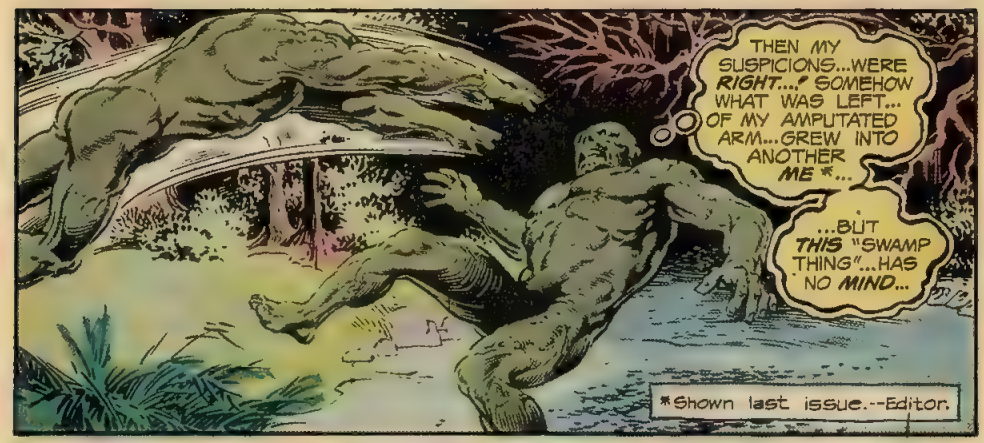
HIS WIFE WAS KILLED BY THE SAME DUDES THAT CAUSED THE EXPLOSION THAT ALMOST KILLED HIM.
MAN, CAN I SYMPATHIZE WITH WHAT HE'S FEELIN'--'CAUSE MY LADY DIED ALMOST THE SAME WAY.
MAYBE WE SHOULD LET DOC HOLLAND DIE, CABLE...
IF THAT'S WHAT THE MAN WANTS...SHOULDN'T HE BE ALLOWED TO HAVE IT... AND REST IN PEACE?
MR. HALSTON! HEY, MR. HALSTON!
EH? WHAT'S WRONG, CARMODY?
IT'S THIS BOULDER, MR. HALSTON. IT'S TOO BIG FOR THE 'DOZER TO SHOVE ASIDE... AND WE'VE GOT TO CLEAR THIS AREA FOR THE FOUNDATION.
I WAS WONDERING--DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD USE EXPLOSIVES?
DO WHAT YOU HAVE TO, CARMODY. I DON'T CARE IF YOU BLOW THAT ROCK CLEAR OFF THE CLIFF!
HALSTON, DO YOU THINK THAT'S WISE?
ALL THAT'S DOWN THERE IS SWAMP, FELLA. YOU DO YOUR JOB, AND I'LL DO MINE.
CLEAR?
VERY.
AND SO, THREE MINUTES LATER, AN EXPLOSION ECHOES THROUGH THE MORNING CALM, DESTROYING THE SILENCE FOR MILES AROUND...
KATHOOM

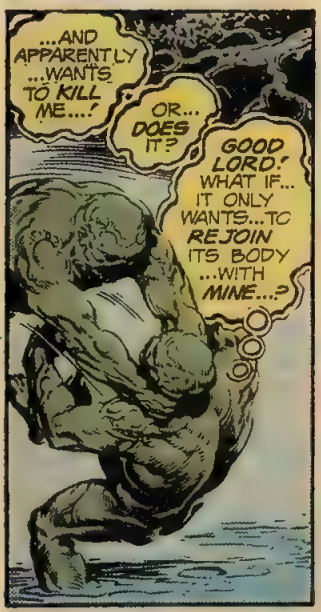
TABLEAU...
THE GROTTO OF ETERNAL YOUTH...
WHEN I FOUND OUR FRIEND, JUNIOR SLOAN, HE WAS LOST--BEWILDERED--LIKE A CHILD.
I SAVED HIS LIFE, AND HE TRUSTS ME...
...JUST AS YOU TRUST ME, YOUNG CHIEF, AND I TRUST YOU. IT IS--
SPIRIT OF MY FATHER!
KATHOOM
THE CLIFF! IT'S EXPLODIN'!
TABLEAU...
SLOAN'S DINER IN GATORBERG...
DINER
EARL! WHAT'S ALL THIS RACKET?
THERE'S A MONSTER, SLOAN--A SLIMY THING OUT ON THE NORTHEAST ROAD!
IT'S ALEC! IT MUST BE! I'VE GOT TO TELL CABLE--
WHAT--? THE CLIFF--SOME SORT OF EXPLOSION--?
KATHOOM
TABLEAU...
SOMEWHERE IN THE SWAMP...
WHAT HAPPENED... WITH THOSE BIKERS...HAS MADE ME THINK...ABOUT MY ARM...!
KATHOOM
IT'S POSSIBLE... JUST POSSIBLE... THAT WHAT HAPPENS TO ME, WHEN MY ARM...REGENERATES ...ALSO HAPPENS TO...
EH...? AN... EXPLOSION...?
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE TO...OWING!


IN THE SPACE OF AN INSTANT, AN UNTHINKING MOMENT, THE WORK OF CENTURIES IS UNDONE...
EARTH AND STONE AVALANCHE DOWN THE MOUNTAINSIDE, COMPLETELY BURYING THE EMERALD GROTTO AND ITS CRYSTAL SPRING--
--BURYING AS WELL ONE MAN'S HOPES AND DREAMS, FOREVER.
MEMBER OF A RACE SEEMINGLY BORN TO HUMILIATION AT THE WHITE MAN'S HAND, HO'TAH MAKANAW HAS SUFFERED MUCH THESE PAST 180 YEARS...
TOO MUCH, WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY... THIS.
WITHIN THE IMMORTAL INDIAN, THE LAST SOFTNESS... SNAPS.
THE WHITE MAN DID THIS. THE CURSED WHITE MAN DESTROYED MY WORLD, MY LIFE--
--AS HE DESTROYED THE LIFE OF MY FATHER--
--AS HE DESTROYED MY RACE!
HE MUST DIE! HE MUST DIE!
SEEK THE WHITE MAN OUT, MY CHILD! SEEK HIM OUT--AND KILL HIM!


JUNIOR SLOAN'S CRY OF HORROR IS UNHEEDED BY THE ENRAGED SEMINOLE AND UNHEARD BY THE MINDLESS MOCK-SWAMP THING...
TO SAY THE CREATURE UNDERSTANDS THE ORDER IT'S BEEN GIVEN WOULD BE AN OVER-STATEMENT..
THIS SWAMP CREATURE IS INCAPABLE OF "UNDERSTANDING" ANYTHING.
YET IT DOES SENSE EMOTION, AND IN A PECULIAR WAY, IT RESPONDS TO HO'TAH MAKANAW'S RAGE.
AFTER ALL, THE INDIAN RESCUED THE MONSTER FROM DEATH IN A QUICK-SAND PIT--
WHAT--? MOTHER OF MERCY!
--AND SOME SAY GRATITUDE IS THE STRONGEST EMOTION OF ALL.
YAAAAAAH!
GOOD LORD, BOLT--DID YOU SEE THAT? ALEC TOSSED THAT MAN--LIKE A SACK OF LIMP WHEAT!
THAT'S NOTHIN', CABLE! NOW HE'S COMIN' THIS WAY--
--LIKE HE DON'T EVEN KNOW WE'RE HERE!
ALEC! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, MAN--STOP!
THIS IS MURDER--UHHHHHH!
BOMP
CABLE!
CONTINUED ON 35th PAGE FOLLOWING
12

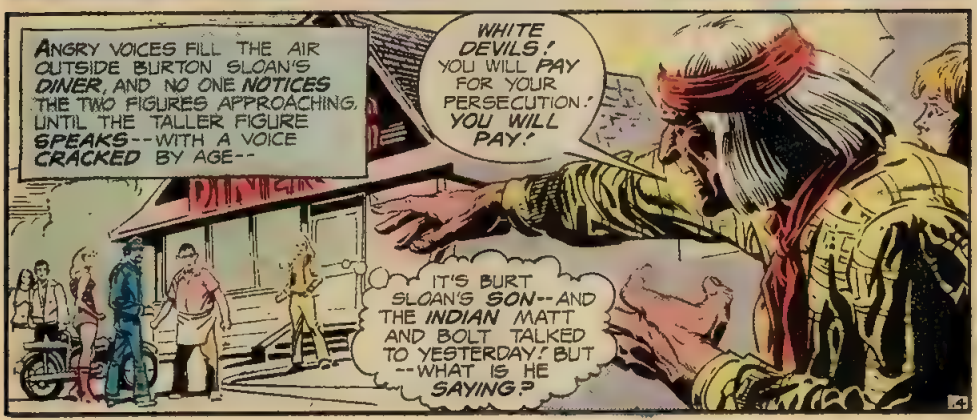
MAN,! HE DIDN'T EVEN HESITATE! ARE YOU OKAY?
HIS EYES--! BOLT, DID YOU SEE --HIS EYES--?
FORGET HIS EYES, CABLE! SOMETHIN' ELSE IS HAPPENIN'--!
"HE SEEMS TO BE LISTENING TO SOMETHING, SOMETHING WE CAN'T HEAR..."
...AND NOW HE'S TURNIN'... AND WALKIN' AWAY!
IT DON'T FIGURE, MATT! HE ACTED LIKE WE WERE STRANGERS...OR ENEMIES...!
DEAR LORD... COULD ALEC HAVE FINALLY GONE... INSANE...?
AS FOR THAT, IT'S A QUESTION EVEN ALEC HOLLAND PONDERS...
THAT... IMPULSE... HAS BECOME PAINFUL ...VERY PAINFUL!
IF WHAT I'M BEGINNING... TO SUSPECT... IS TRUE...THE ONLY WAY TO STOP THE PAIN...IS TO KILL WHAT'S CAUSING IT...!
...YOU!
MY EXACT... DOUBLE!

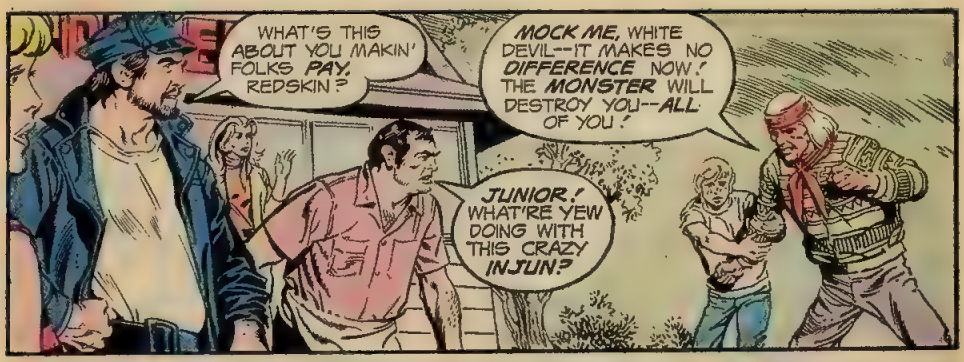

THEN MY SUSPICIONS...WERE RIGHT...! SOMEHOW WHAT WAS LEFT... OF MY AMPUTATED ARM...GREW INTO ANOTHER ME *...
...BUT THIS "SWAMP THING"...HAS NO MIND...
*Shown last issue.--Editor.


...AND APPARENTLY ...WANTS TO KILL ME...!
OR... DOES IT?
GOOD LORD! WHAT IF... IT ONLY WANTS...TO REJOIN ITS BODY ...WITH MINE...?

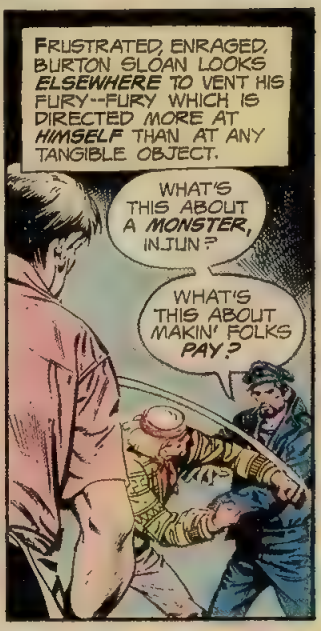
I HAVE TO...THINK THIS THROUGH...
...BECAUSE UNLESS I'M MISTAKEN... WE'RE EACH A MATCH FOR THE OTHER...

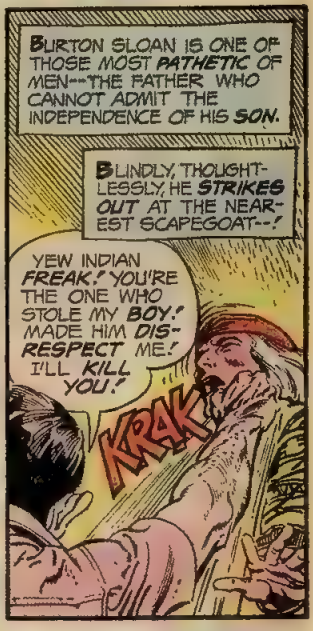
...WHICH MEANS WE COULD GET STUCK IN A STALE-MATE...
...THAT WOULD GO ON FOREVER!
KRASH

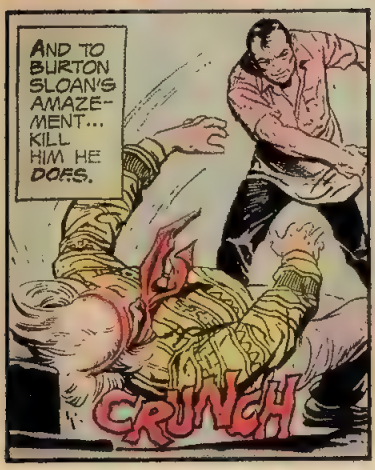

ANGRY VOICES FILL THE AIR OUTSIDE BURTON SLOAN'S DINER, AND NO ONE NOTICES THE TWO FIGURES APPROACHING, UNTIL THE TALLER FIGURE SPEAKS--WITH A VOICE CRACKED BY AGE--
WHITE DEVILS! YOU WILL PAY FOR YOUR PERSECUTION! YOU WILL PAY!
IT'S BURT SLOAN'S SON--AND THE INDIAN MATT AND BOLT TALKED TO YESTERDAY! BUT --WHAT IS HE SAYING?
4


WHAT'S THIS ABOUT YOU MAKIN' FOLKS PAY, REDSKIN?
MOCK ME, WHITE DEVIL--IT MAKES NO DIFFERENCE NOW! THE MONSTER WILL DESTROY YOU--ALL OF YOU!
JUNIOR! WHAT'RE YEW DOING WITH THIS CRAZY INJUN?

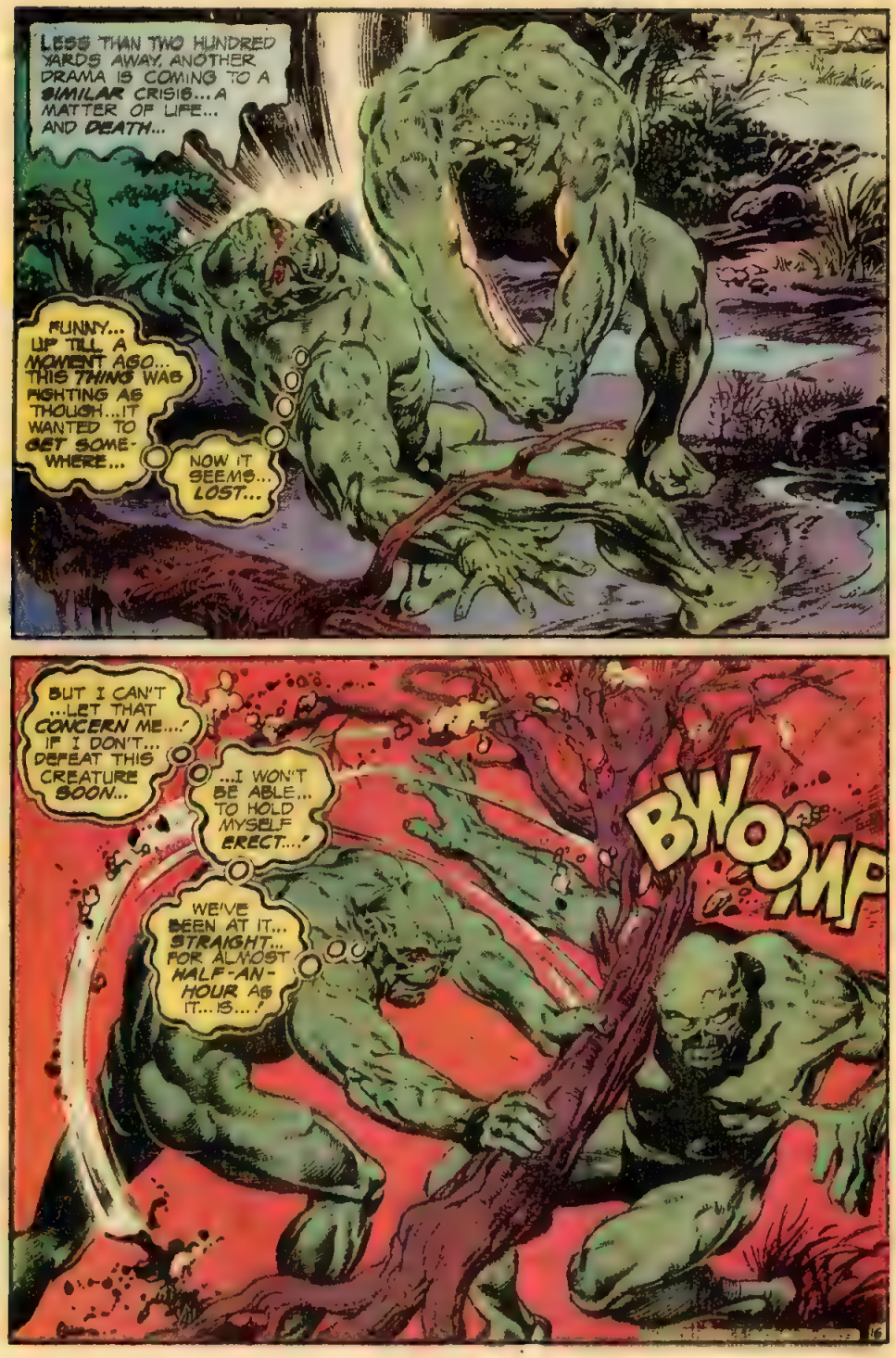
I-I WARNED YOU ABOUT SEEIN' HIM, BOY! I WARNED YOU!
BUT, DAD--I'M TRYING TO TELL YOU! HE'S GOT THIS MONS--UNNNH!
MR. SLOAN! NO!
WHACK


FRUSTRATED, ENRAGED, BURTON SLOAN LOOKS ELSEWHERE TO VENT HIS FURY--FURY WHICH IS DIRECTED MORE AT HIMSELF THAN AT ANY TANGIBLE OBJECT.
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT A MONSTER, INJUN?
WHAT'S THIS ABOUT MAKIN' FOLKS PAY?


BURTON SLOAN IS ONE OF THOSE MOST PATHETIC OF MEN--THE FATHER WHO CANNOT ADMIT THE INDEPENDENCE OF HIS SON.
BLINDLY, THOUGHTLESSLY, HE STRIKES OUT AT THE NEAREST SCAPEGOAT--!
YEW INDIAN FREAK! YOU'RE THE ONE WHO STOLE MY BOY! MADE HIM DISRESPECT ME! I'LL KILL YOU!
KRAK


AND TO BURTON SLOAN'S AMAZEMENT... KILL HIM HE DOES.
CRUNCH

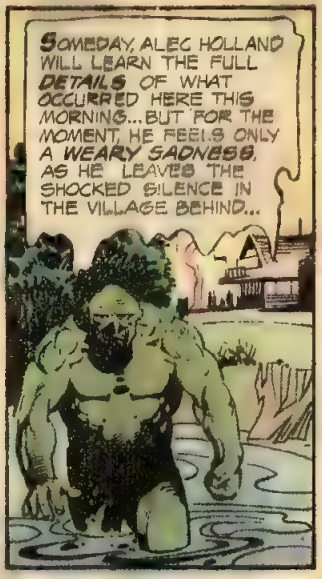
BURT... YOU KILLED HIM. HE'S DEAD.
DEAD?
OH MY GOD!


LESS THAN TWO HUNDRED YARDS AWAY, ANOTHER DRAMA IS COMING TO A SIMILAR CRISIS... A MATTER OF LIFE... AND DEATH...
FUNNY... UP TILL A MOMENT AGO... THIS THING WAS FIGHTING AS THOUGH... IT WANTED TO GET SOME-WHERE...
NOW IT SEEMS... LOST...
BUT I CAN'T ...LET THAT CONCERN ME...! IF I DON'T... DEFEAT THIS CREATURE SOON...
...I WON'T BE ABLE... TO HOLD MYSELF ERECT...!
WE'VE BEEN AT IT... STRAIGHT... FOR ALMOST HALF-AN-HOUR AS IT... IS...!
BWOOMP
16

THIS NEXT... BLOW... HAS GOT TO BE... THE LAST....
WHAMM!
STAGGERED BY THE IMPACT, THE DUPLICATE - "SWAMP THING" FALLS TO THE GROUND...
AND THEN, SOME THING ODD HAPPENS...
THE PSEUDO-THING LIFTS ITS HEAD AND SEES THE DEAD INDIAN LYING SEVERAL YARDS DISTANT...
SLOWLY, IT'S BATTLE FORGOTTEN, THE SWAMP CREATURE RISES...
FORGOTTEN IS THE INSTINCT WHICH HAS DRIVEN THIS CREATURE ACROSS A CONTINENT...
FORGOTTEN IS THE ANGER WHICH IT LEECHED FROM AN OLD INDIAN'S RAGE...
ALL OF IT HAS BEEN REPLACED BY SOMETHING WHICH MIGHT AS WELL BE TERMED LOVE, FOR LACK OF A BETTER NAME...
THERE HE IS!
MATT CABLE--BOLT--? WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
SULLIVAN'S DINER
GOOD THING I HAD YOU BOYS DRIVE ME DOWN HERE! WE'VE GOTTA DESTROY THAT CREATURE!
HALSTON, DON'T BE CRAZY--!

I'M AN ENGINEER, BOLT! I KNOW EXPLOSIVES BETTER'N ANY-ONE! NOW, GET OUT OF MY WAY--
--AND DUCK!
BRA-DOOM

AND, WHEN THE MURKY SMOKE HAS CLEARED..
MATT ...HE'S DEAD.
ALEC HOLLAND... IS DEAD.


SOMEDAY, ALEC HOLLAND WILL LEARN THE FULL DETAILS OF WHAT OCCURRED HERE THIS MORNING... BUT FOR THE MOMENT, HE FEELS ONLY A WEARY SADNESS, AS HE LEAVES THE SHOCKED SILENCE IN THE VILLAGE BEHIND...

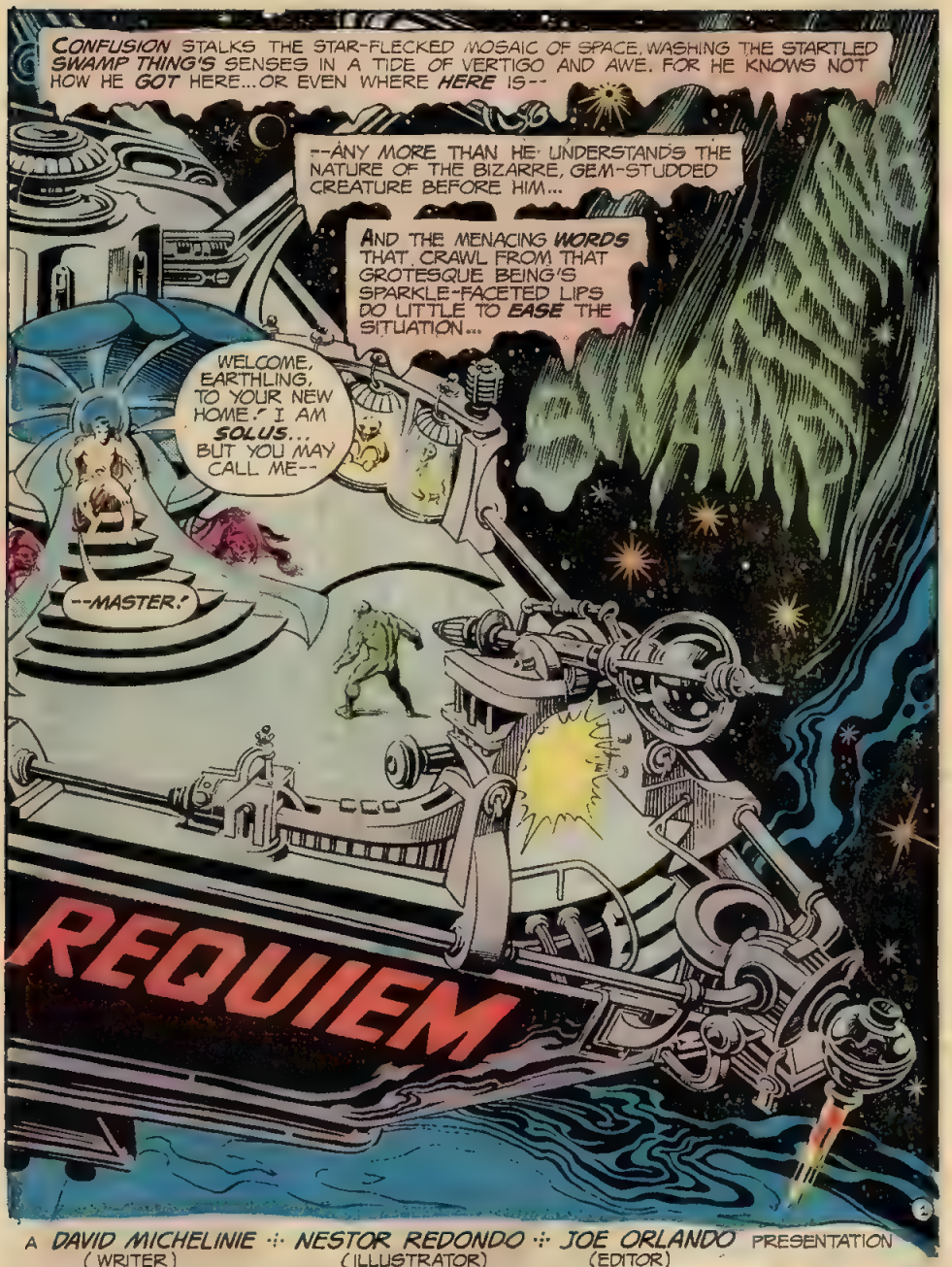
FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE, HOWEVER LONG IT MAY BE...
...ALEC HOLLAND WILL WONDER WHY.

NEXT ISSUE:
REQUIEM
ON SALE THE FIRST WEEK IN NOVEMBER

SWAMP THING
THE LINE OF DC SUPER-STARS
A STAR-SPANNING SHOCKER!
25¢
NO. 21
MAR.
30686

SWAMP THING

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY


CONFUSION STALKS THE STAR-FLECKED MOSAIC OF SPACE, WASHING THE STARTLED SWAMP THING'S SENSES IN A TIDE OF VERTIGO AND AWE. FOR HE KNOWS NOT HOW HE GOT HERE... OR EVEN WHERE HERE IS--
--ANY MORE THAN HE UNDERSTANDS THE NATURE OF THE BIZARRE, GEM-STUDDED CREATURE BEFORE HIM...
AND THE MENACING WORDS THAT CRAWL FROM THAT GROTESQUE BEING'S SPARKLE-FACETED LIPS DO LITTLE TO EASE THE SITUATION...
WELCOME, EARTHLING, TO YOUR NEW HOME. I AM SOLUS... BUT YOU MAY CALL ME--
--MASTER!
REQUIEM

A DAVID MICHELINIE ·:· NESTOR REDONDO ·:· JOE ORLANDO PRESENTATION
(WRITER) (ILLUSTRATOR) (EDITOR)

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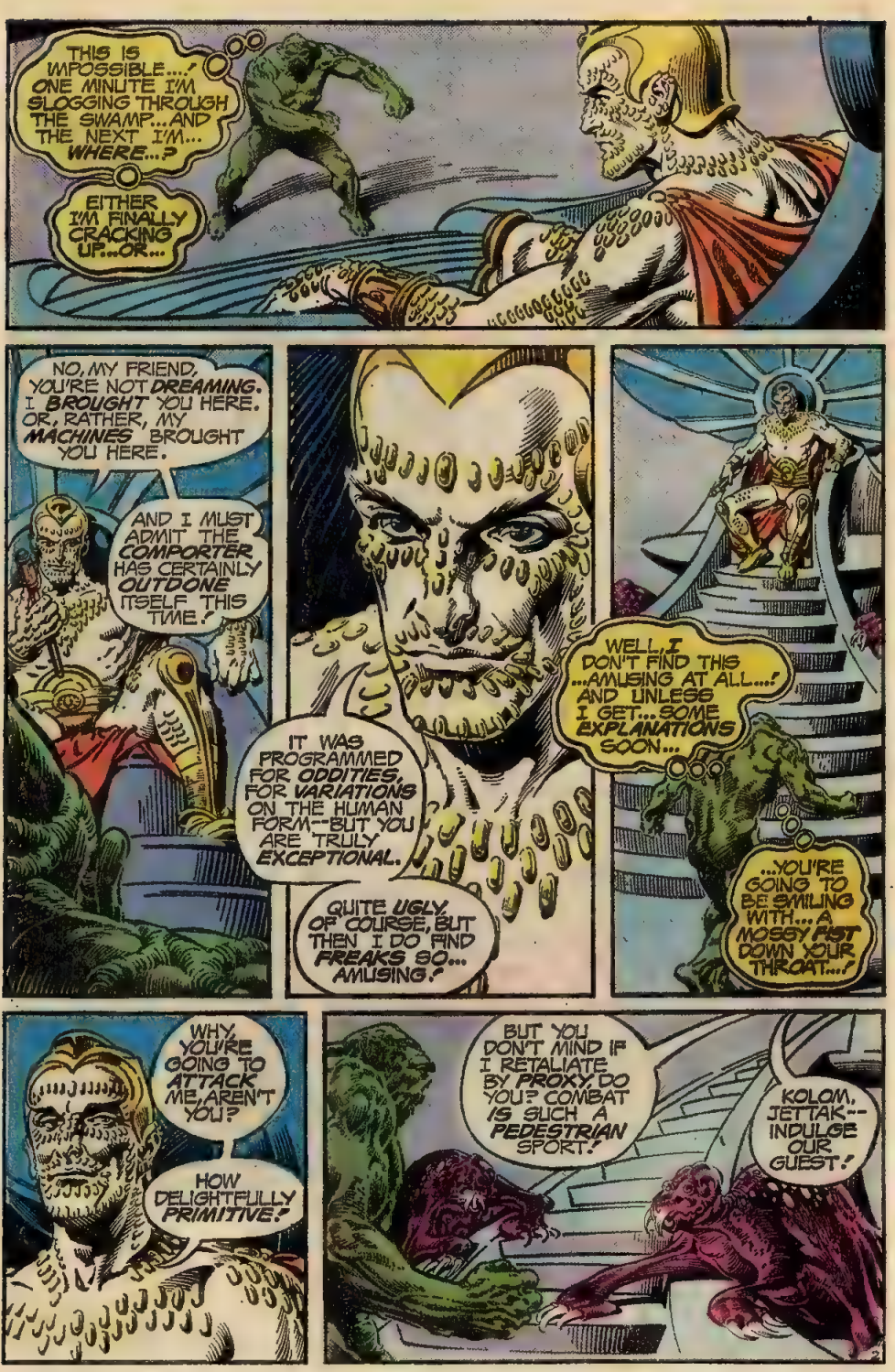
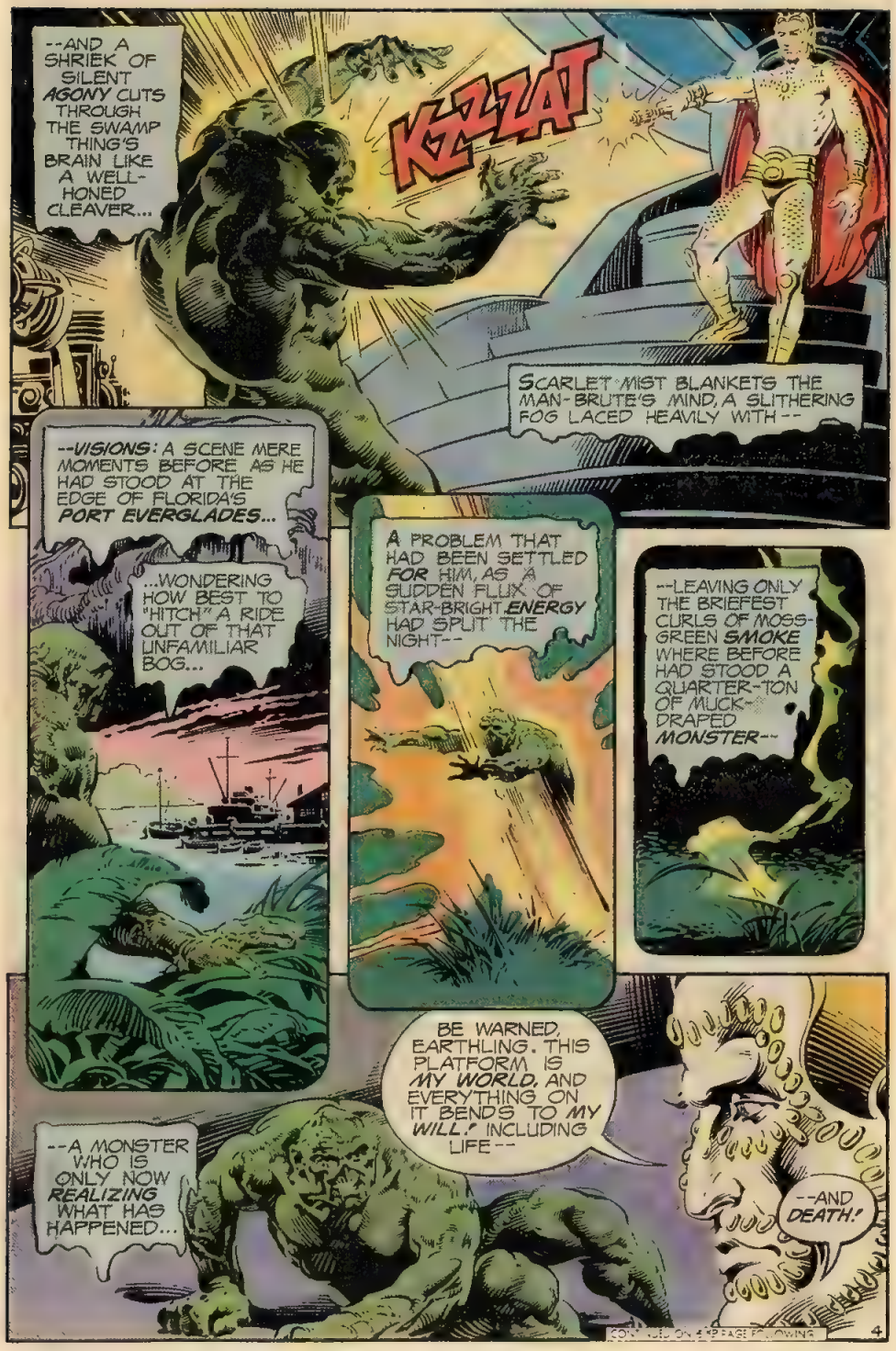
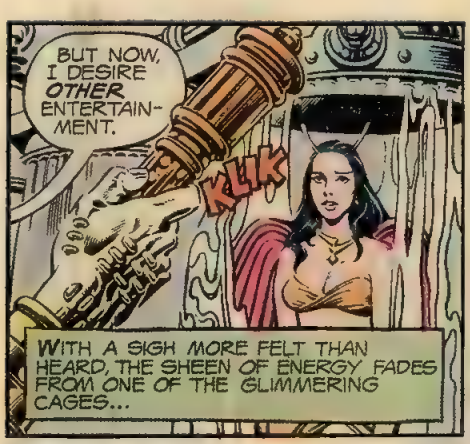
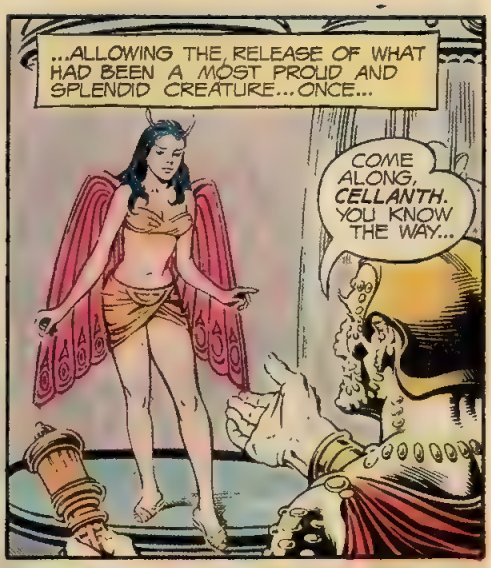

THIS IS IMPOSSIBLE...! ONE MINUTE I'M SLOGGING THROUGH THE SWAMP... AND THE NEXT I'M... WHERE...?
EITHER I'M FINALLY CRACKING UP...OR...
NO, MY FRIEND, YOU'RE NOT DREAMING. I BROUGHT YOU HERE. OR, RATHER, MY MACHINES BROUGHT YOU HERE.
AND I MUST ADMIT THE COMPORTER HAS CERTAINLY OUTDONE ITSELF THIS TIME!
IT WAS PROGRAMMED FOR ODDITIES, FOR VARIATIONS ON THE HUMAN FORM--BUT YOU ARE TRULY EXCEPTIONAL.
QUITE UGLY, OF COURSE, BUT THEN I DO FIND FREAKS SO... AMUSING!
WELL, I DON'T FIND THIS ...AMUSING AT ALL...! AND UNLESS I GET... SOME EXPLANATIONS SOON...
...YOU'RE GOING TO BE SMILING WITH... A MOSSY FIST DOWN YOUR THROAT...!
WHY YOU'RE GOING TO ATTACK ME, AREN'T YOU?
HOW DELIGHTFULLY PRIMITIVE!
BUT YOU DON'T MIND IF I RETALIATE BY PROXY, DO YOU? COMBAT IS SUCH A PEDESTRIAN SPORT!
KOLOM, JETTAK-- INDULGE OUR GUEST!

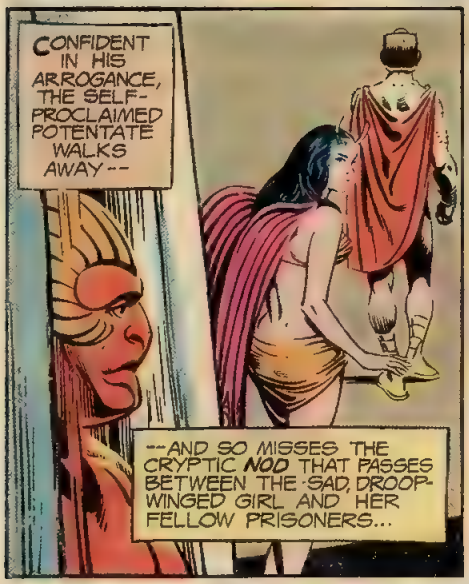
LIKE MINDLESS SLUGS, THE SLAVERING BEASTS SLIDE FORWARD, LASHING OUT WITH SPEED AND FEROCITY INCONGRUOUS TO THEIR BULK...
...ONLY TO FIND THAT THEIR FOE IS NOT WITHOUT FEROCITY OF HIS OWN...
LOOKS LIKE "DIAMOND JIM"... IS THE ONLY ONE WHO KNOWS ...WHAT'S GOING ON HERE...
SPLAK
SO IF I HAVE TO GO THROUGH... THESE SLIMY BODYGUARDS TO...GET TO HIM...
...THEN THAT'S JUST ...WHAT I'M GOING TO DO...
KLOSH
OKAY, SPARKLES... NOW IT'S JUST YOU AND ME...
BUT AS THE HULKING MONSTROSITY SHAMBLES UP THE BURNISHED METAL STEPS, A GLITTERING HAND WAVES AN ORNATE, BUTTON-RIMMED CYLINDER--
3


--AND A SHRIEK OF SILENT AGONY CUTS THROUGH THE SWAMP THING'S BRAIN LIKE A WELL-HONED CLEAVER...
KZZZAT
SCARLET MIST BLANKETS THE MAN-BRUTE'S MIND, A SLITHERING FOG LACED HEAVILY WITH--
--VISIONS: A SCENE MERE MOMENTS BEFORE AS HE HAD STOOD AT THE EDGE OF FLORIDA'S PORT EVERGLADES...
...WONDERING HOW BEST TO "HITCH" A RIDE OUT OF THAT UNFAMILIAR BOG...
A PROBLEM THAT HAD BEEN SETTLED FOR HIM, AS A SUDDEN FLUX OF STAR-BRIGHT ENERGY HAD SPLIT THE NIGHT--
--LEAVING ONLY THE BRIEFEST CURLS OF MOSS-GREEN SMOKE WHERE BEFORE HAD STOOD A QUARTER-TON OF MUCK-DRAPED MONSTER--
--A MONSTER WHO IS ONLY NOW REALIZING WHAT HAS HAPPENED...
BE WARNED, EARTHLING. THIS PLATFORM IS MY WORLD, AND EVERYTHING ON IT BENDS TO MY WILL! INCLUDING LIFE--
--AND DEATH!
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE FOLLOWING

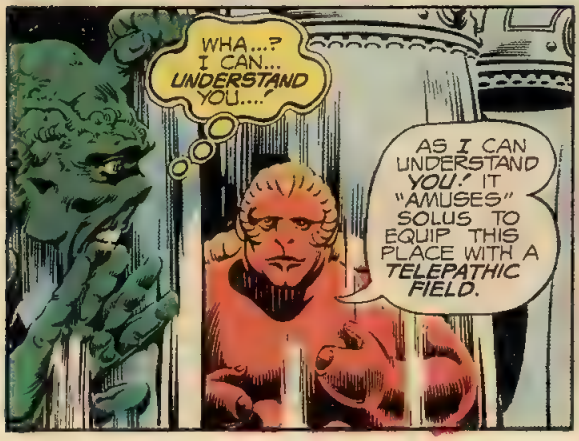
YOU WERE BROUGHT HERE BECAUSE I REQUIRE SUBJECTS, BUT YOU ARE EXPENDABLE!
AND MY WRATH CAN BE MOST EXCRUCIATING, AS YOU HAVE LEARNED!
SUCH POWER IS MY HERITAGE, FOR MY RACE IS ONE OF MENTAL GIANTS! PSIONIC WIZARDS WHO MANIPULATE MATTER, ENERGY--AND MINDS --THROUGH MERE PHYSICAL CONTACT.
THOUGH MY PERSONAL GENIUS HAS SURMOUNTED EVEN THAT LIMITATION.
FOR WITH THIS CONTROL UNIT I DEVISED, MY ABILITIES ARE ELECTRONICALLY AUGMENTED --SO THAT I CAN CONTROL ANYTHING ON THIS PLATFORM BY THOUGHT ALONE!
THUS, YOU CAN UNDERSTAND HOW ANY ATTEMPT TO ESCAPE WOULD PROVE QUITE... FOOLHARDY.
BUT ENOUGH OF THIS CHIT-CHAT. BRING HIM ALONG, MY PETS. WE MUST FIND OUR NEW GUEST--
"--SUITABLE QUARTERS!"
RELAX, EARTHLING, I DESIGNED THE STASIS TUBES MYSELF, AND I ASSURE YOU THEY ARE COMPLETELY INDESTRUCTIBLE! THOUGH YOU SHOULD BE COMFORTABLE ENOUGH--
--AS LONG AS YOU REMAIN... ENTERTAINING!


BUT NOW, I DESIRE OTHER ENTERTAIN-MENT.
KLK
WITH A SIGH MORE FELT THAN HEARD, THE SHEEN OF ENERGY FADES FROM ONE OF THE GLIMMERING CAGES...

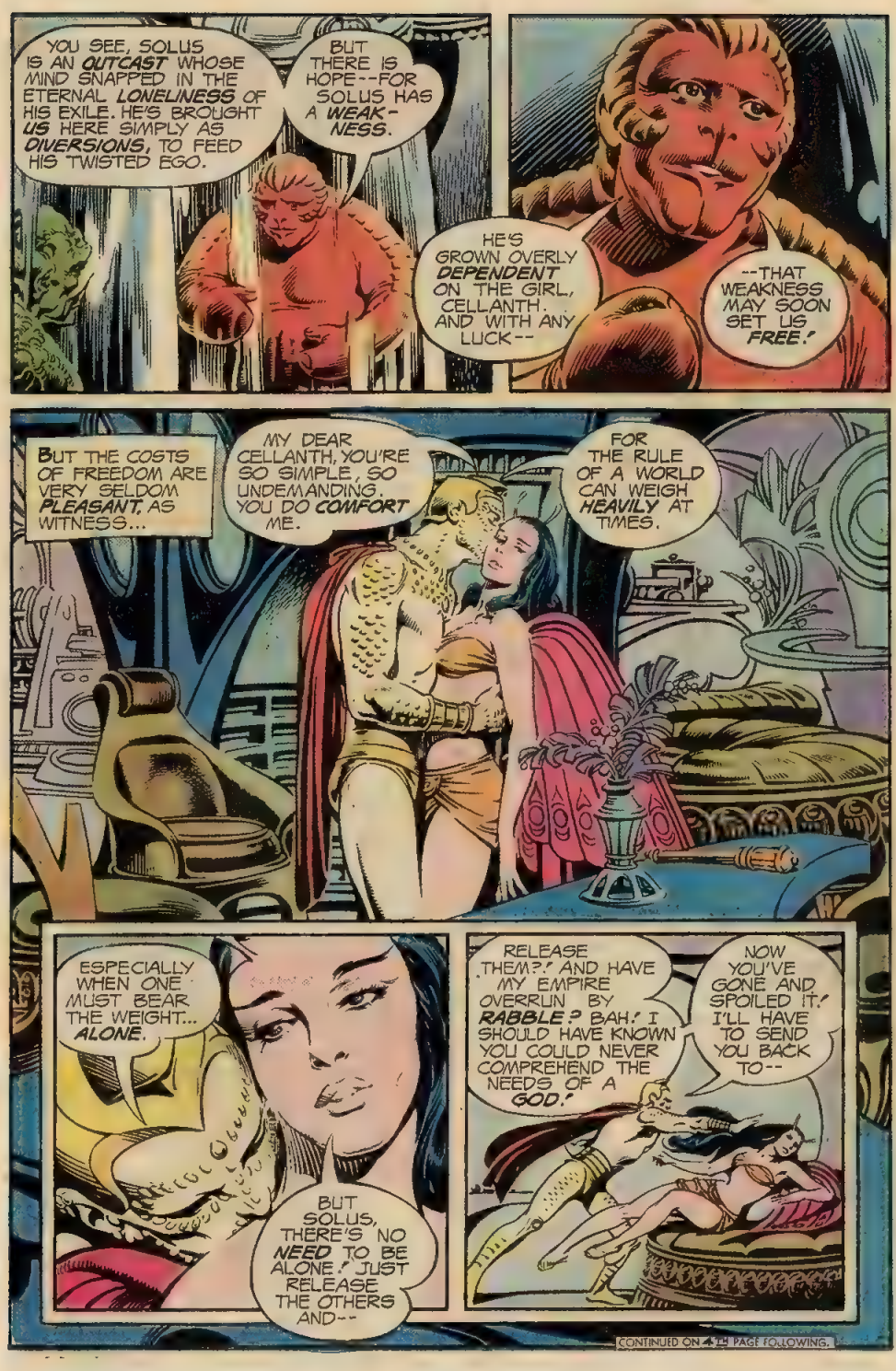

...ALLOWING THE RELEASE OF WHAT HAD BEEN A MOST PROUD AND SPLENDID CREATURE... ONCE...
COME ALONG, CELLANTH. YOU KNOW THE WAY...


CONFIDENT IN HIS ARROGANCE, THE SELF-PROCLAIMED POTENTATE WALKS AWAY--
--AND SO MISSES THE CRYPTIC NOD THAT PASSES BETWEEN THE SAD, DROOP-WINGED GIRL AND HER FELLOW PRISONERS...

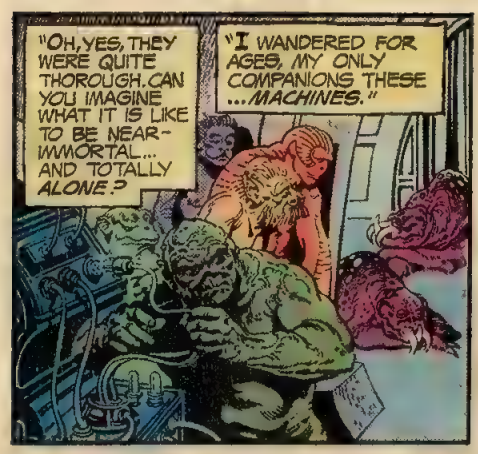
...A GESTURE THAT GOES UN-NOTICED BY A CERTAIN PRE-OCCUPIED MAN-MONSTER AS WELL...
HE WASN'T KIDDING...UNF!... ABOUT THESE WALLS...! THEY'RE HARDER THAN--
SAVE YOUR STRENGTH, FRIEND. IT'S NO USE.

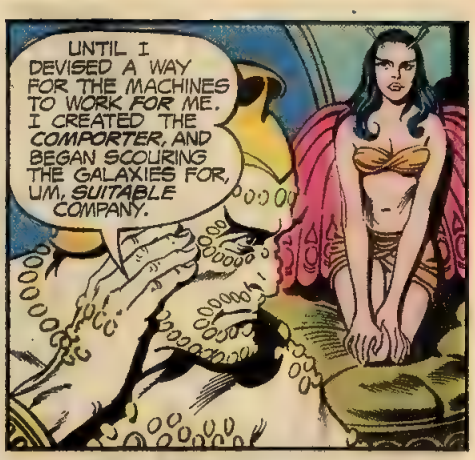

WHA...? I CAN... UNDERSTAND YOU...!
AS I CAN UNDERSTAND YOU! IT "AMUSES" SOLUS TO EQUIP THIS PLACE WITH A TELEPATHIC FIELD.

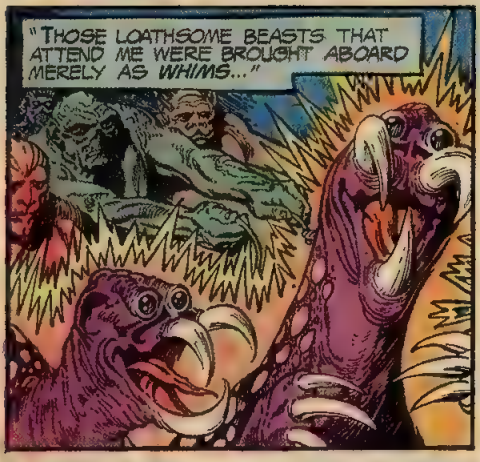
THEN MAYBE YOU CAN TELL ME... WHAT THE HELL IS GOING ON HERE...!
THERE'S LITTLE TO TELL, I'M AFRAID. EXCEPT THAT WE'RE ALL SLAVES--
--AND THAT OUR KEEPER IS A MADMAN!

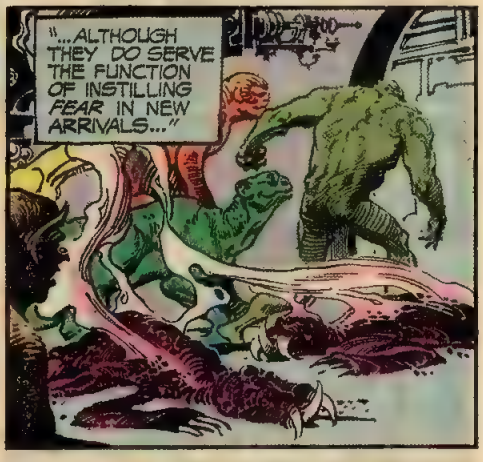

YOU SEE, SOLUS IS AN OUTCAST WHOSE MIND SNAPPED IN THE ETERNAL LONELINESS OF HIS EXILE. HE'S BROUGHT US HERE SIMPLY AS DIVERSIONS, TO FEED HIS TWISTED EGO.
BUT THERE IS HOPE--FOR SOLUS HAS A WEAK-NESS.
HE'S GROWN OVERLY DEPENDENT ON THE GIRL, CELLANTH. AND WITH ANY LUCK--
--THAT WEAKNESS MAY SOON SET US FREE!
BUT THE COSTS OF FREEDOM ARE VERY SELDOM PLEASANT, AS WITNESS...
MY DEAR CELLANTH, YOU'RE SO SIMPLE, SO UNDEMANDING. YOU DO COMFORT ME.
FOR THE RULE OF A WORLD CAN WEIGH HEAVILY AT TIMES.
ESPECIALLY WHEN ONE MUST BEAR THE WEIGHT... ALONE.
BUT SOLUS, THERE'S NO NEED TO BE ALONE! JUST RELEASE THE OTHERS AND--
RELEASE THEM?! AND HAVE MY EMPIRE OVERRUN BY RABBLE? BAH! I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN YOU COULD NEVER COMPREHEND THE NEEDS OF A GOD!
NOW YOU'VE GONE AND SPOILED IT! I'LL HAVE TO SEND YOU BACK TO--
CONTINUED ON 4TH PAGE FOLLOWING.

O-OH, NO, SOLUS, PLEASE! I-LET ME STAY! I JUST DIDN'T UNDERSTAND! PERHAPS, IF YOU'D EXPLAIN...
DEAR, DEAR CELLANTH. YOU'RE SO LIKE A CHILD.
VERY WELL, IF A STORY WILL PLEASE YOU...
YES, MY PEOPLE WERE GODS, BEAUTIFUL IN MIND AND BODY--AND I WAS A GOD AMONG GODS! A MEMBER OF ROYALTY, IN LINE FOR THE THRONE!
ONLY I HAD A BROTHER OLDER THAN I--AND THE THRONE WAS DENIED ME.
BUT MY BROTHER WAS A POOR SOVEREIGN, WEAK IN MATTERS OF STATE. HAD HIS RULE CONTINUED, OUR WORLD WOULD HAVE SUFFERED IMMEASURABLY.
KLIK
"AND SO, SIMPLY, I KILLED HIM. MY MOTIVES WERE UNDENIABLY PATRIOTIC BUT, SOMEHOW, THE ELDERS DIDN'T UNDERSTAND.
"THEY CALLED IT... MURDER."
AND SO THEY SOUGHT TO PUNISH ME! ME--WHO ONLY TRIED TO SAVE THEM!
"THEY SET ME ADRIFT ON THIS SELF-SUSTAINING PLATFORM AND FORGOT ME. ONLY THAT WASN'T ENOUGH!"
NO, TO INSURE MY COMPLETE EXILE, THEY IMPLANTED THESE UGLY NODULES IN MY SKIN--
--AND SET THEM TO SELF-DESTRUCT AT THE SLIGHTEST TOUCH OF PLANETARY SOIL!
8


"OH, YES, THEY WERE QUITE THOROUGH. CAN YOU IMAGINE WHAT IT IS LIKE TO BE NEAR-IMMORTAL... AND TOTALLY ALONE?
"I WANDERED FOR AGES, MY ONLY COMPANIONS THESE ...MACHINES."


UNTIL I DEVISED A WAY FOR THE MACHINES TO WORK FOR ME. I CREATED THE COMPORTER, AND BEGAN SCOURING THE GALAXIES FOR, UM, SUITABLE COMPANY.

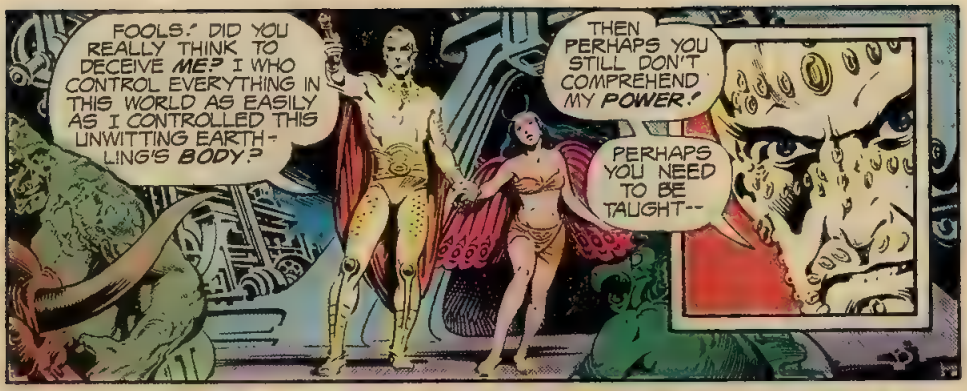

"THOSE LOATHSOME BEASTS THAT ATTEND ME WERE BROUGHT ABOARD MERELY AS WHIMS..."

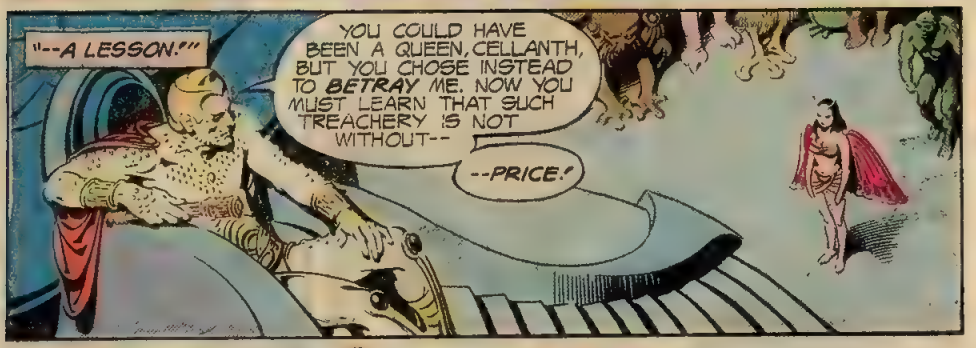

"...ALTHOUGH THEY DO SERVE THE FUNCTION OF INSTILLING FEAR IN NEW ARRIVALS..."

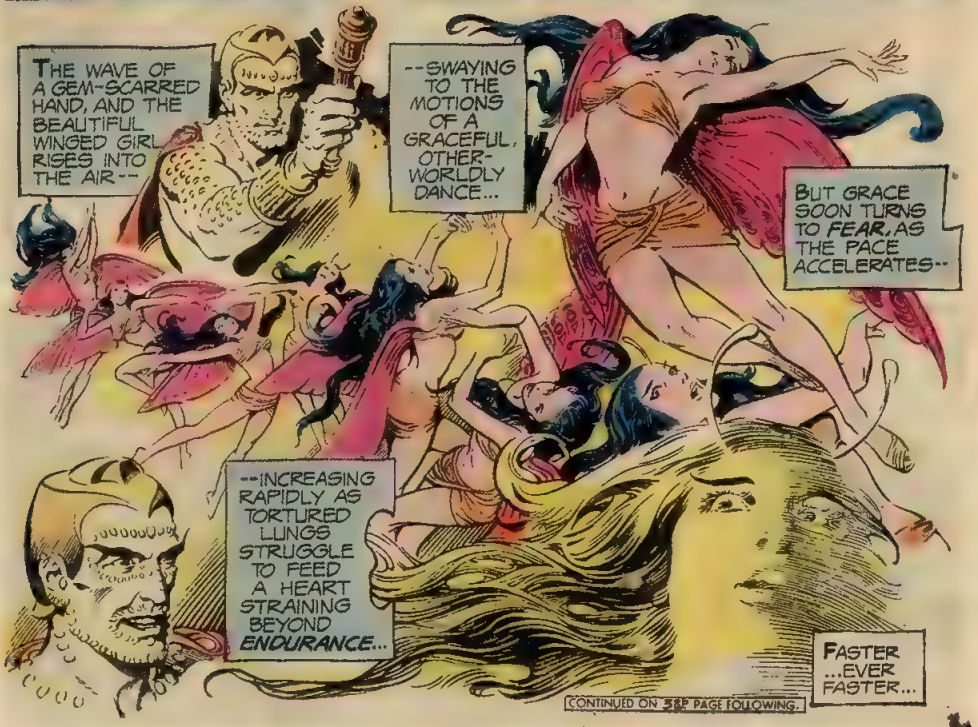
BUT EVEN WITH SUBJECTS TO RULE, LONELINESS REMAINS MY ENEMY. I HAVE HAD TOO MUCH OF IT.
BUT NOW, YOU HELP ME FIGHT THAT FOE. ONLY YOU--

--MY DEAR ...LOYAL... CELLANTH...
CONTINUED ON 57TH PAGE FOLLOWING.

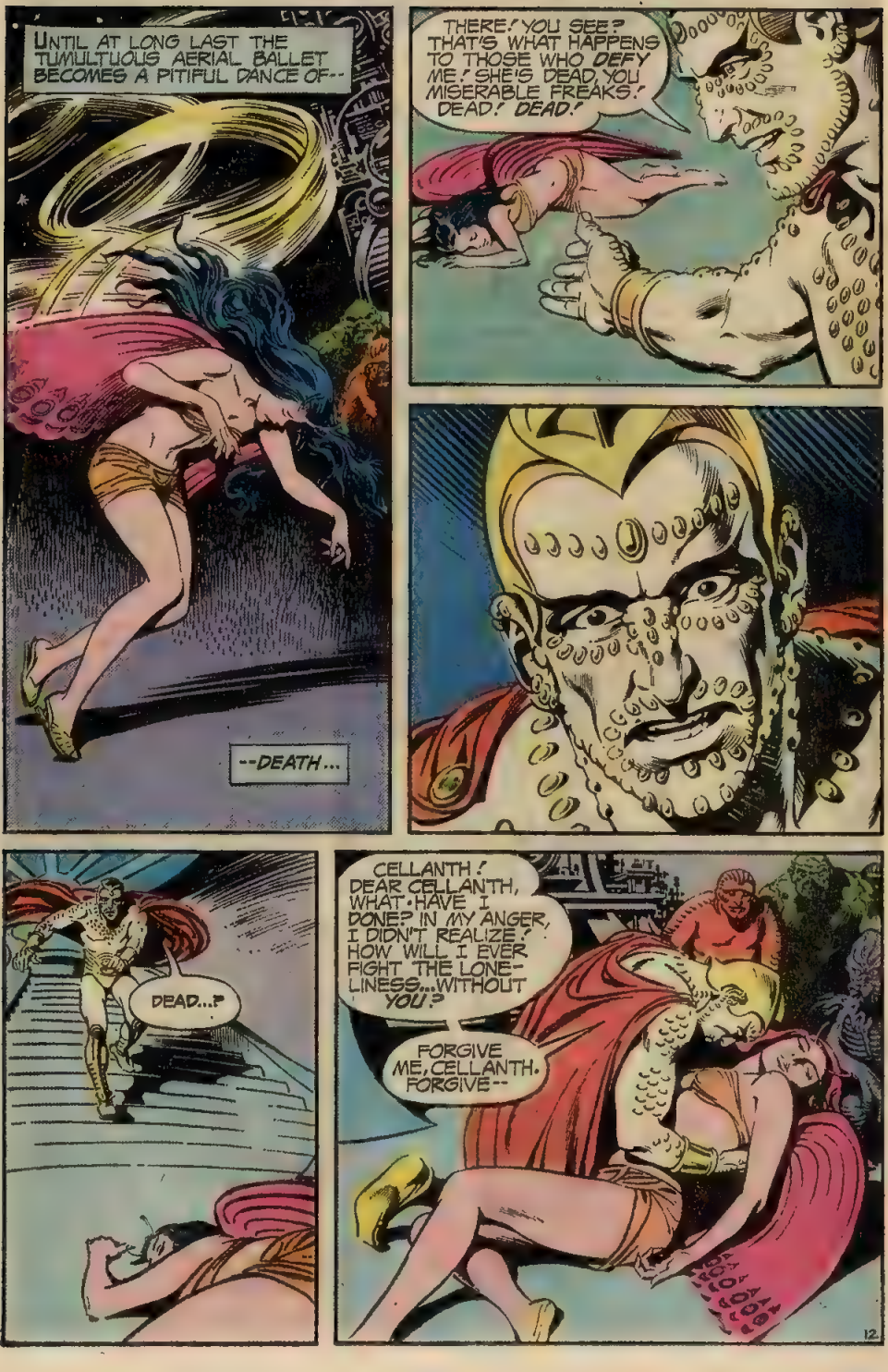
THIS TELEPORTATION DEVICE OF SOLUS' SEEMS SIMPLE ENOUGH. ONCE WE ENTER THE BEAM OUR BRAIN-WAVE PATTERNS SHOULD CAUSE IT TO TRANSPORT US BACK TO OUR HOME WORLDS.
I JUST WISH WE HAD TIME TO SAVE CELLANTH...
A NOBLE THOUGHT--BUT SOON IT WILL NOT BE THE SELF-SACRIFICING GIRL WHO NEEDS SAVING...
WHA-?
THE EARTHLING--HE'S GONE MAD!
GOOD GOD...! WHAT AM I DOING...?
WHAK SH
AAAGGYII!
I DON'T WANT... TO HURT ANYONE ...BUT I CAN'T HELP MYSELF...!
IT'S LIKE I'VE BECOME SOME SORT... OF GIGANTIC PUPPET...?
LIKE A CAPTIVE IN HIS OWN BODY, THE HELPLESS SWAMP THING CAN BUT GAPE IN STUNNED HORROR AS THE AIR FILLS WITH CRIES OF SHOCK AND PAIN--
--AND THE COLD METAL FLOOR RAINBOWS WITH ALIEN BLOOD...
...UNTIL...
ENOUGH!

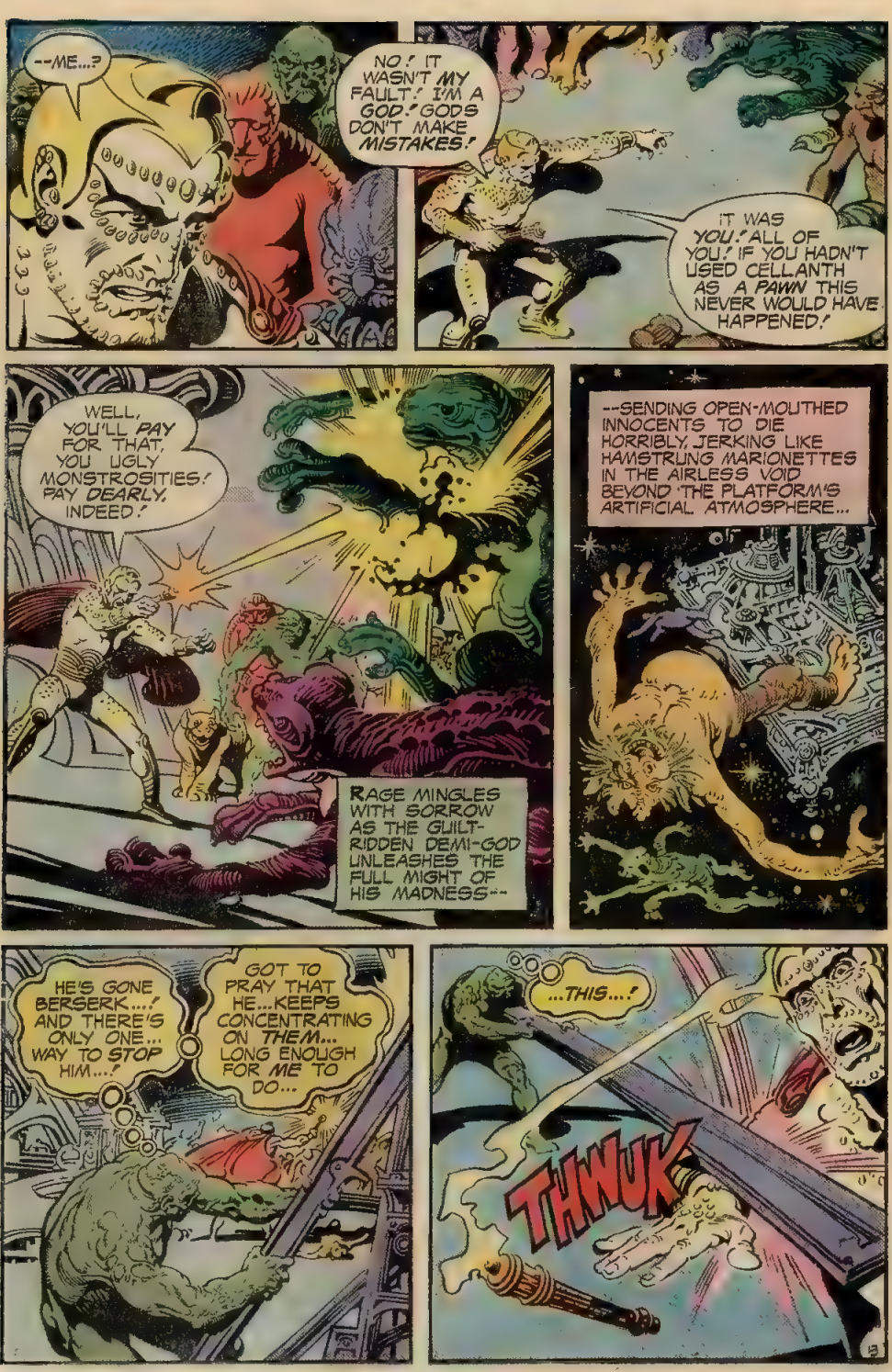

FOOLS! DID YOU REALLY THINK TO DECEIVE ME? I WHO CONTROL EVERYTHING IN THIS WORLD AS EASILY AS I CONTROLLED THIS UNWITTING EARTH-LING'S BODY?
THEN PERHAPS YOU STILL DON'T COMPREHEND MY POWER!
PERHAPS YOU NEED TO BE TAUGHT--

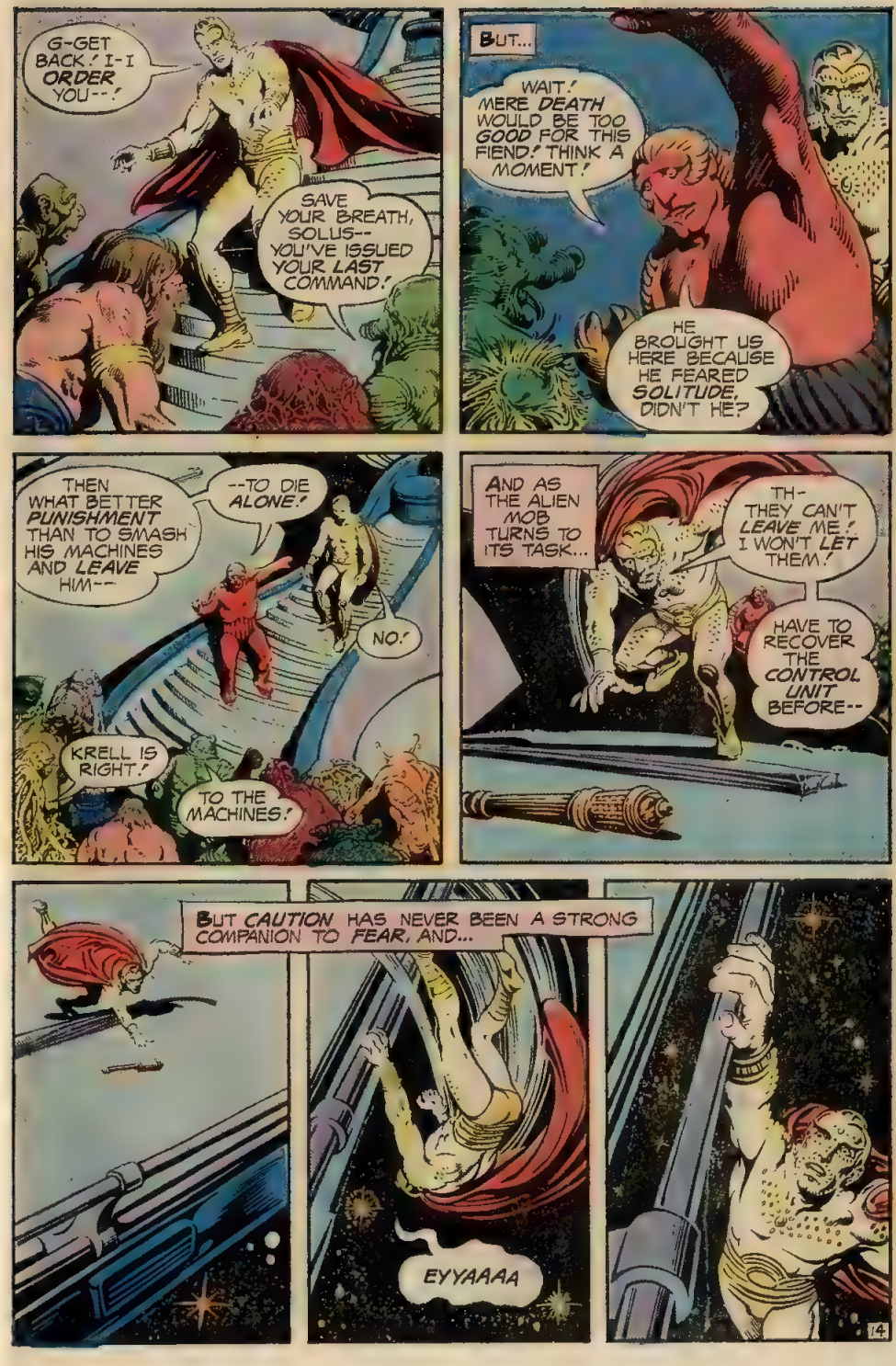

"--A LESSON!"
YOU COULD HAVE BEEN A QUEEN, CELLANTH, BUT YOU CHOSE INSTEAD TO BETRAY ME. NOW YOU MUST LEARN THAT SUCH TREACHERY IS NOT WITHOUT--
--PRICE!

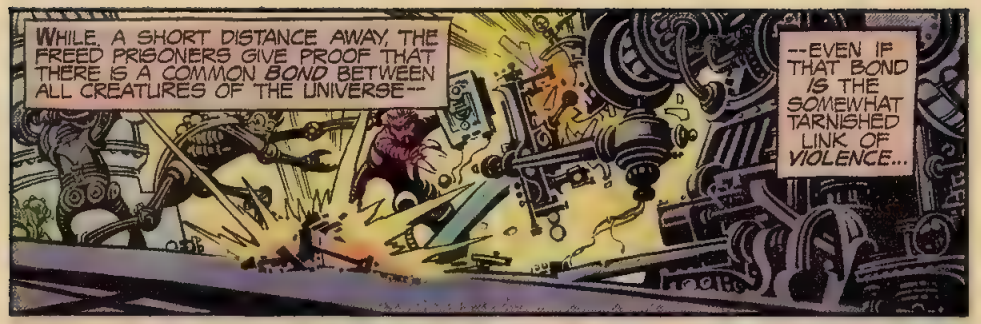

THE WAVE OF A GEM-SCARRED HAND, AND THE BEAUTIFUL WINGED GIRL RISES INTO THE AIR--
--SWAYING TO THE MOTIONS OF A GRACEFUL, OTHER-WORLDLY DANCE...
BUT GRACE SOON TURNS TO FEAR, AS THE PACE ACCELERATES--
--INCREASING RAPIDLY AS TORTURED LUNGS STRUGGLE TO FEED A HEART STRAINING BEYOND ENDURANCE...
FASTER ...EVER FASTER...

CONTINUED ON 58P PAGE FOLLOWING.

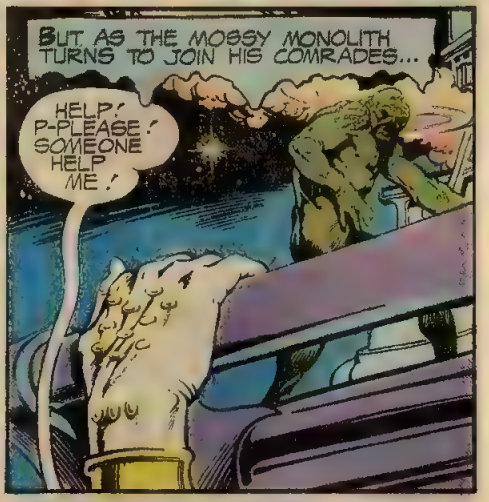

UNTIL AT LONG LAST THE TUMULTUOUS AERIAL BALLET BECOMES A PITIFUL DANCE OF--
--DEATH...
THERE! YOU SEE? THAT'S WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE WHO DEFY ME! SHE'S DEAD, YOU MISERABLE FREAKS! DEAD! DEAD!
DEAD...?
CELLANTH! DEAR CELLANTH, WHAT HAVE I DONE? IN MY ANGER, I DIDN'T REALIZE! HOW WILL I EVER FIGHT THE LONELINESS...WITHOUT YOU!?
FORGIVE ME, CELLANTH. FORGIVE--


--ME...?
NO! IT WASN'T MY FAULT! I'M A GOD! GODS DON'T MAKE MISTAKES!
IT WAS YOU! ALL OF YOU! IF YOU HADN'T USED CELLANTH AS A PAWN THIS NEVER WOULD HAVE HAPPENED!
WELL, YOU'LL PAY FOR THAT, YOU UGLY MONSTROSITIES! PAY DEARLY, INDEED!
RAGE MINGLES WITH SORROW AS THE GUILT-RIDDEN DEMI-GOD UNLEASHES THE FULL MIGHT OF HIS MADNESS--
--SENDING OPEN-MOUTHED INNOCENTS TO DIE HORRIBLY, JERKING LIKE HAMSTRUNG MARIONETTES IN THE AIRLESS VOID BEYOND THE PLATFORM'S ARTIFICIAL ATMOSPHERE...
HE'S GONE BERSERK...! AND THERE'S ONLY ONE... WAY TO STOP HIM...!
GOT TO PRAY THAT HE...KEEPS CONCENTRATING ON THEM... LONG ENOUGH FOR ME TO DO...
...THIS...!
THWUK

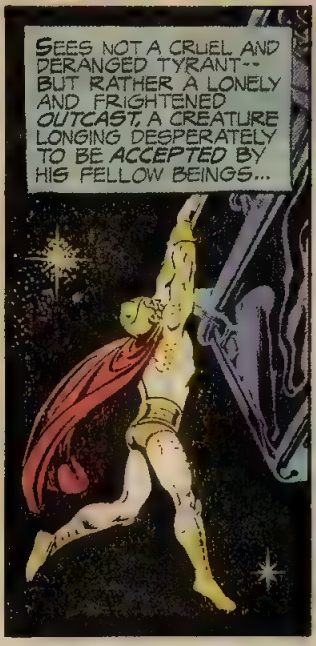

G-GET BACK! I-I ORDER YOU--!
SAVE YOUR BREATH, SOLUS-- YOU'VE ISSUED YOUR LAST COMMAND!
BUT...
WAIT! MERE DEATH WOULD BE TOO GOOD FOR THIS FIEND! THINK A MOMENT!
HE BROUGHT US HERE BECAUSE HE FEARED SOLITUDE, DIDN'T HE?
THEN WHAT BETTER PUNISHMENT THAN TO SMASH HIS MACHINES AND LEAVE HIM--
--TO DIE ALONE!
NO!
KRELL IS RIGHT!
TO THE MACHINES!
AND AS THE ALIEN MOB TURNS TO ITS TASK...
TH- THEY CAN'T LEAVE ME! I WON'T LET THEM!
HAVE TO RECOVER THE CONTROL UNIT BEFORE--
BUT CAUTION HAS NEVER BEEN A STRONG COMPANION TO FEAR, AND...
EYYAAAA
14

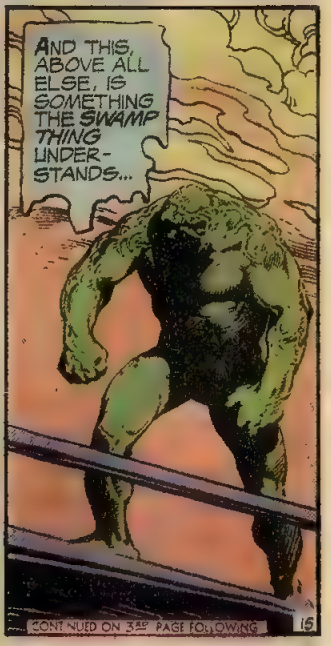

WHILE, A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, THE FREED PRISONERS GIVE PROOF THAT THERE IS A COMMON BOND BETWEEN ALL CREATURES OF THE UNIVERSE--
--EVEN IF THAT BOND IS THE SOMEWHAT TARNISHED LINK OF VIOLENCE...

AND THEN...
HURRY! WE'VE UNDER-ESTIMATED THE EFFECTS OF OUR DESTRUCTION! WE MUST TELEPORT QUICKLY--
--BEFORE THE WHOLE PLATFORM EXPLODES!


BUT AS THE MOSSY MONOLITH TURNS TO JOIN HIS COMRADES...
HELP! P-PLEASE! SOMEONE HELP ME!

LEAVE HIM, EARTH-LING! HE GETS ONLY WHAT HE DESERVES!
BUT FOR A MOMENT, THE SHAMBLING MARSH MONSTER HESITATES... AND PERHAPS REALLY SEES HIS FOE FOR THE FIRST TIME...

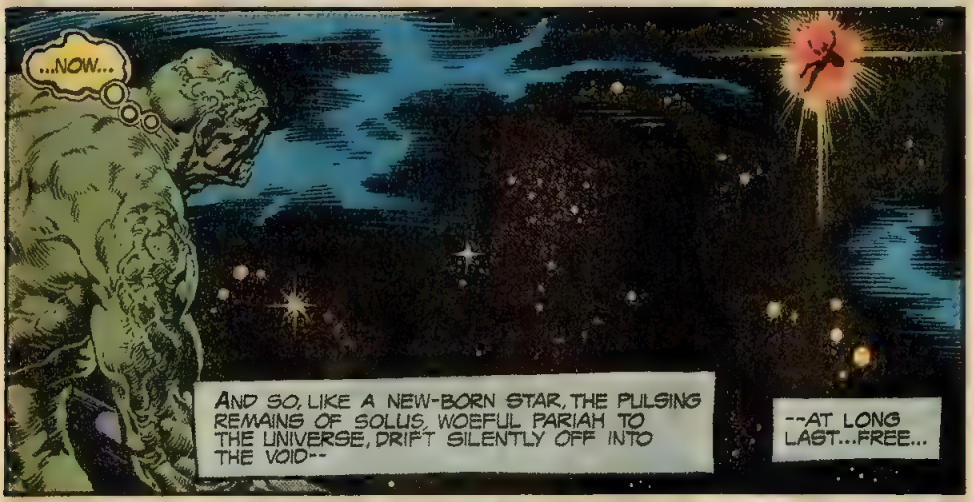

SEES NOT A CRUEL AND DERANGED TYRANT-- BUT RATHER A LONELY AND FRIGHTENED OUTCAST, A CREATURE LONGING DESPERATELY TO BE ACCEPTED BY HIS FELLOW BEINGS...

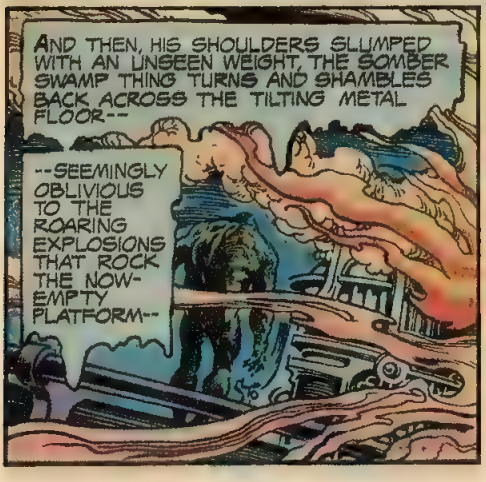

AND THIS, ABOVE ALL ELSE, IS SOMETHING THE SWAMP THING UNDER-STANDS...
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

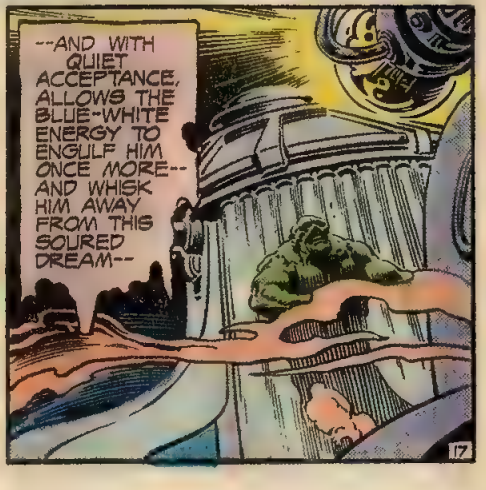
COME ON, SPARKLES ...DYING WHEN THIS PLATFORM BLOWS...MAY NOT BE MUCH BETTER THAN... SUFFOCATING OUT THERE...
...BUT AT LEAST YOU'LL HAVE--
THEN SUDDENLY, WITH SPEED BORN OF DESPERATION, A JEWEL-CRUSTED HAND GRASPS A MOSSY WRIST--
--WITH SINGULARLY DISASTROUS RESULTS...
FOOL! NOW YOU'RE MINE!
YOU FORGET THAT EVEN WITHOUT THE CONTROL UNIT, I CAN MASTER YOUR MIND BY TOUCH ALONE! AND WITH YOU AS MY SLAVE I CAN STOP THOSE--
BUT...
WHA-? I-IT CAN'T BE! THE SELF-DESTRUCT NODULES--
--THEY'VE BECOME ACTIVATED!
BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! TH-THEY CAN ONLY BE TRIGGERED IF I TOUCH-- PLANETARY SOIL!
THEN IT'S YOU WHO'S... THE FOOL, SOLUS...
...BECAUSE YOU NEVER STOPPED TO THINK... THAT ONE OF THE "FREAKS" YOU ABDUCTED...
...MIGHT BE MADE OF... PLANETARY SOIL...!

BUT REALIZATION COMES FAR TOO LATE AS THE FLESH-HUNGRY RADIATION SPREADS, DEVOURING MORE AND MORE OF THE HORRIFIED DESPOT'S PAIN-TWISTED FORM...

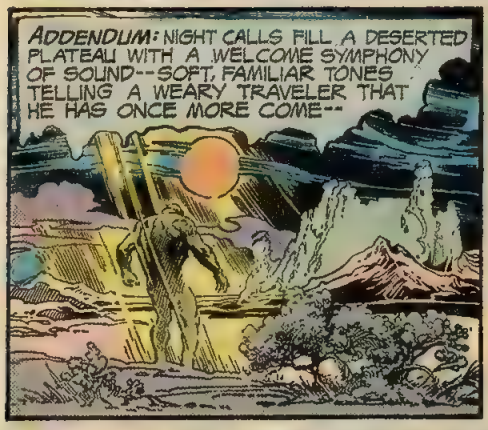
UNTIL FINALLY, IT IS ALL HE CAN DO TO UTTER A LAST, WHISPERY CRY...
HELP... ME...
I'M SORRY, SOLUS... THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO...

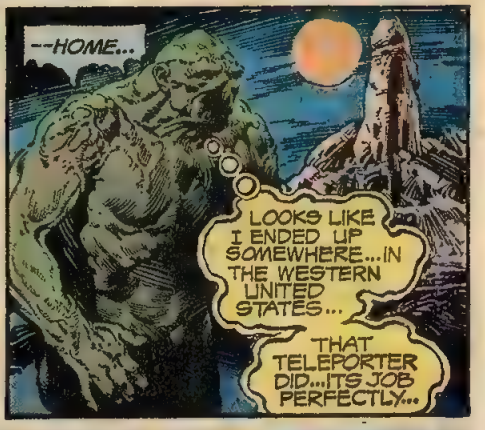

...NOW...
AND SO, LIKE A NEW-BORN STAR, THE PULSING REMAINS OF SOLUS, WOEFUL PARIAH TO THE UNIVERSE, DRIFT SILENTLY OFF INTO THE VOID--
--AT LONG LAST...FREE...

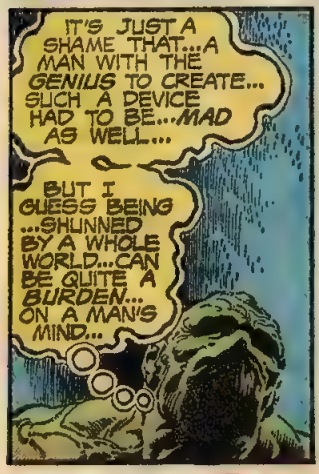

AND THEN, HIS SHOULDERS SLUMPED WITH AN UNSEEN WEIGHT, THE SOMBER SWAMP THING TURNS AND SHAMBLES BACK ACROSS THE TILTING METAL FLOOR--
--SEEMINGLY OBLIVIOUS TO THE ROARING EXPLOSIONS THAT ROCK THE NOW-EMPTY PLATFORM--


--AND WITH QUIET ACCEPTANCE, ALLOWS THE BLUE-WHITE ENERGY TO ENGULF HIM ONCE MORE-- AND WHISK HIM AWAY FROM THIS SOURED DREAM--

--MERE SECONDS BEFORE ITS END...
RRRAKABAROOM


ADDENDUM: NIGHT CALLS FILL A DESERTED PLATEAU WITH A WELCOME SYMPHONY OF SOUND--SOFT, FAMILIAR TONES TELLING A WEARY TRAVELER THAT HE HAS ONCE MORE COME--


--HOME...
LOOKS LIKE I ENDED UP SOMEWHERE...IN THE WESTERN UNITED STATES...
THAT TELEPORTER DID...ITS JOB PERFECTLY...


IT'S JUST A SHAME THAT...A MAN WITH THE GENIUS TO CREATE... SUCH A DEVICE HAD TO BE...MAD AS WELL....
BUT I GUESS BEING ...SHUNNED BY A WHOLE WORLD...CAN BE QUITE A BURDEN... ON A MAN'S MIND...

YEAH...

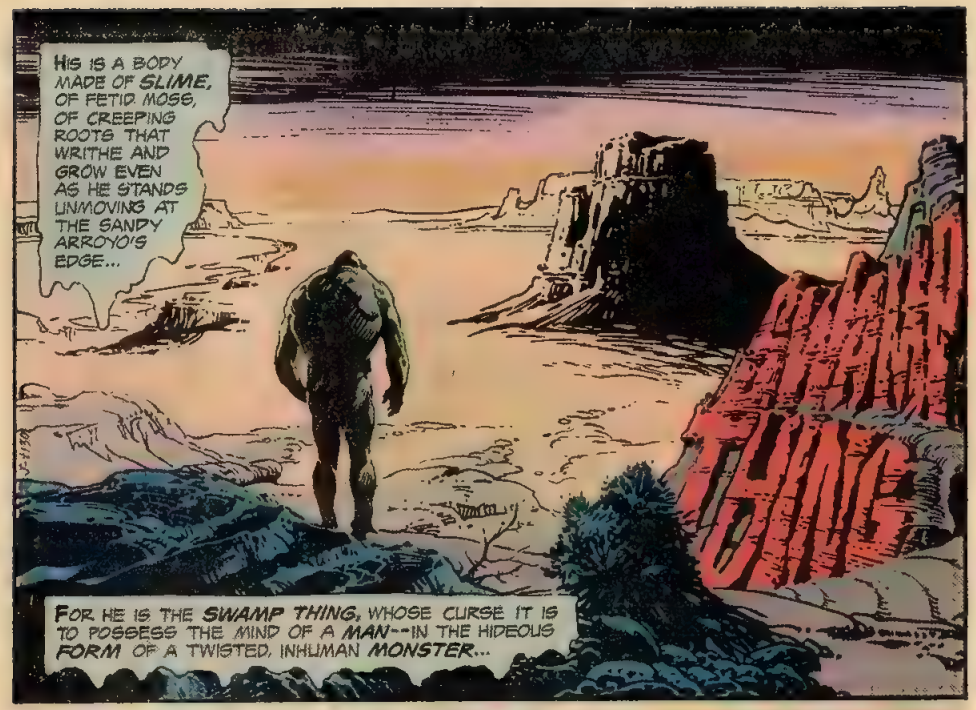
SO TELL ME ABOUT IT, WORLD...
...JUST TELL ME ABOUT IT...

NEXT:
THE SOLOMON PLAGUE
ON SALE DURING THE SECOND WEEK IN JANUARY

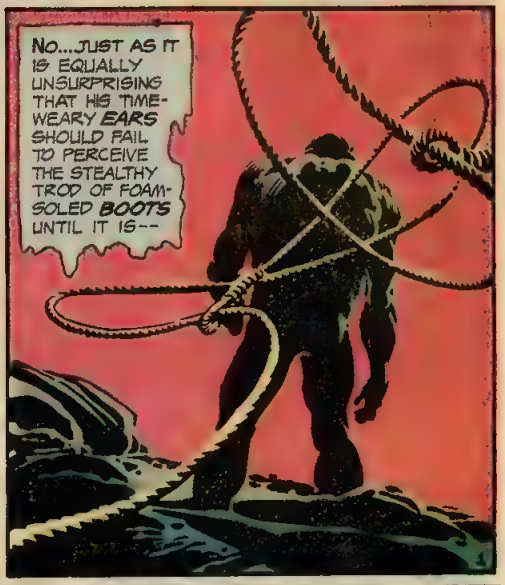
SWAMP THING
THE LINE OF DC SUPER-STARS
MONSTER HUNT IN THE ARIZONA DESERT!
30¢
NO. 22
MAY
30686

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

SWAMP THING


HIS IS A BODY MADE OF SLIME, OF FETID MOSS, OF CREEPING ROOTS THAT WRITHE AND GROW EVEN AS HE STANDS UNMOVING AT THE SANDY ARROYO'S EDGE...
SWAMP THING
FOR HE IS THE SWAMP THING, WHOSE CURSE IT IS TO POSSESS THE MIND OF A MAN--IN THE HIDEOUS FORM OF A TWISTED, INHUMAN MONSTER...

AND SO IS IT ANY WONDER THAT THIS PATHETIC CREATURE WHO WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND SHOULD PAUSE BRIEFLY TO SAVOR THE FLEETING COMFORT OF AN EVENING BREEZE--
--TO FIND MOMENTARY PEACE IN THE GOLD AND LAVENDER MAJESTY OF A DESERT SUNSET...?


NO...JUST AS IT IS EQUALLY UNSURPRISING THAT HIS TIME-WEARY EARS SHOULD FAIL TO PERCEIVE THE STEALTHY TROD OF FOAM-SOLED BOOTS UNTIL IT IS--

SWAMP THING, Vol. 5, No. 22, April-May, 1976. Published bi-monthly by NATIONAL PERIODICAL PUBLICATIONS INC. 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N.Y. 10019. Carmine Infantino, Publisher, Joe Orlando, Editor, Paul Levitz, Assistant Editor, Sol Harrison, Vice President—Director of Operations, Bernard Kashdan, Vice President—Business Manager, Jack Adler, Production Manager. Second Class Postage paid at New York, N.Y. and Additional Mailing Offices. Advertising Representative, Sanford Schwarz & Co., Inc., 355 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y. 10017, (212) 391-1400. Copyright © 1976 by National Periodical Publications, Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual person living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

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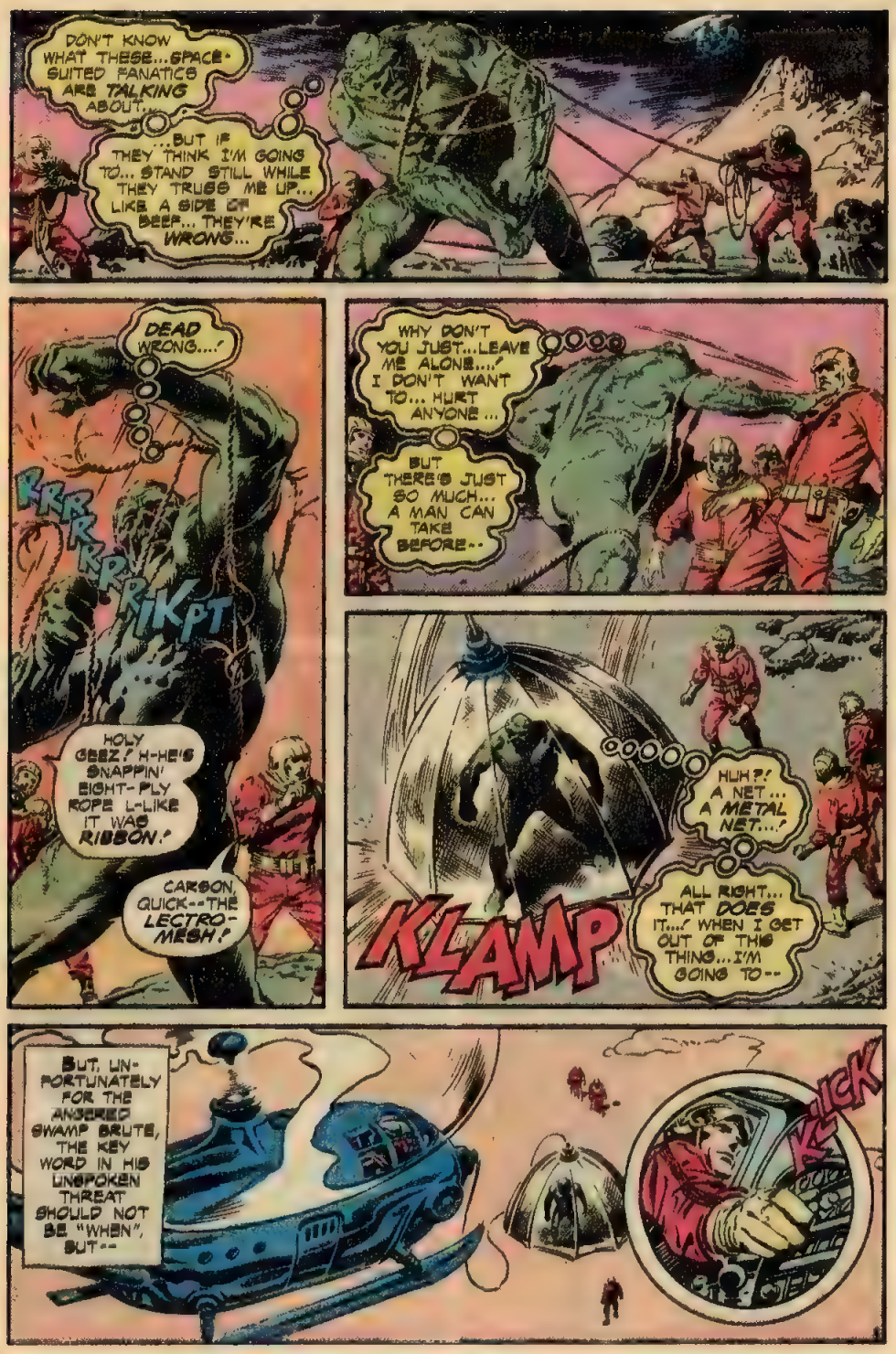
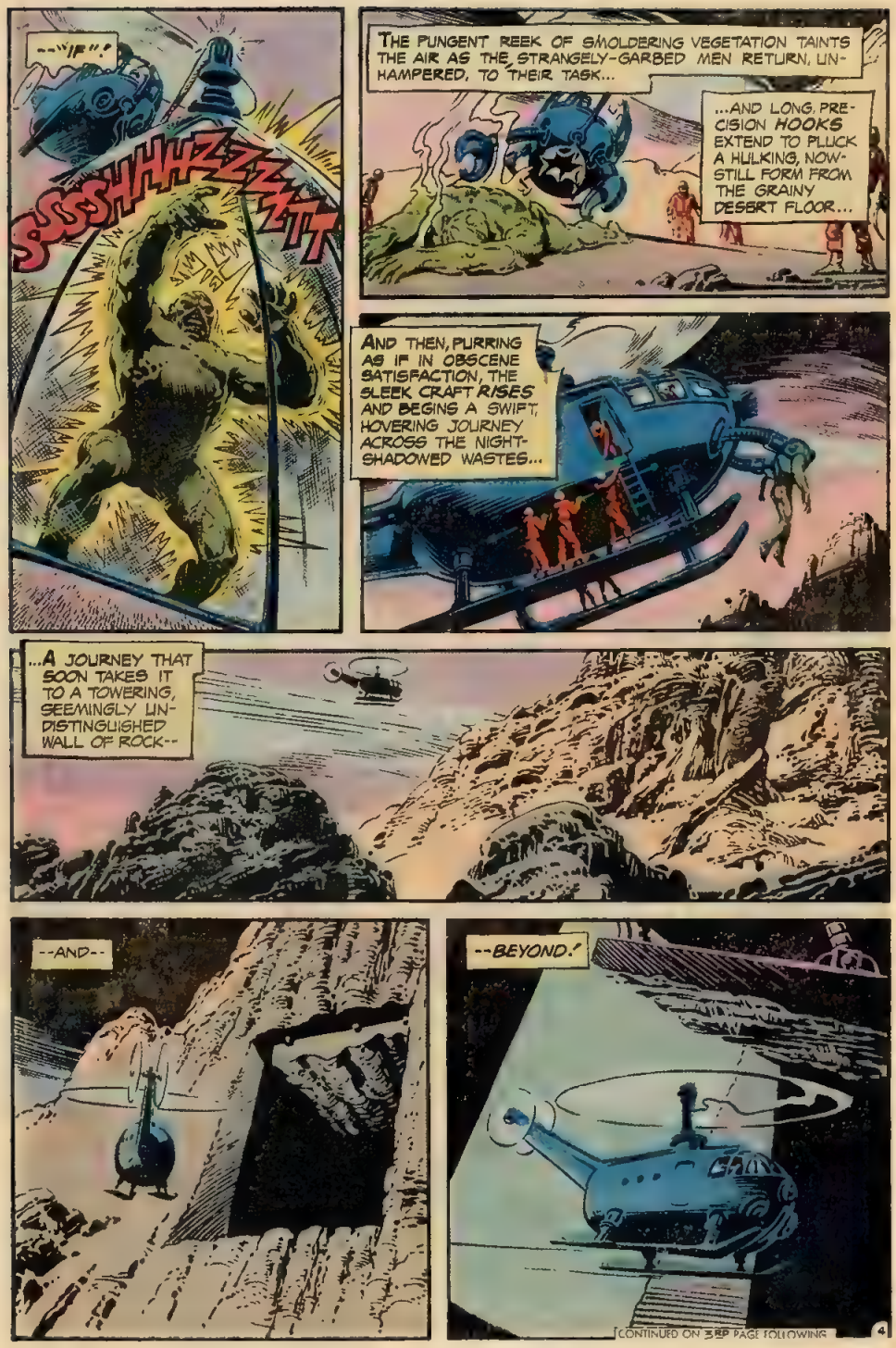
--TOO LATE!
LORDY! THIS'S THE BIGGEST STRAY YET! MUSTA BEEN REAL CLOSE TO THE FAULT!
YEAH, AN' HE'S STRONG, TOO, SO FOR CRIPES' SAKE DON'T LET 'IM TEAR YOUR SUIT!
ONE TOUCH O' THAT FILTHY OOZE--AND YOU'RE DEAD!
THE SOLOMON PLAGUE

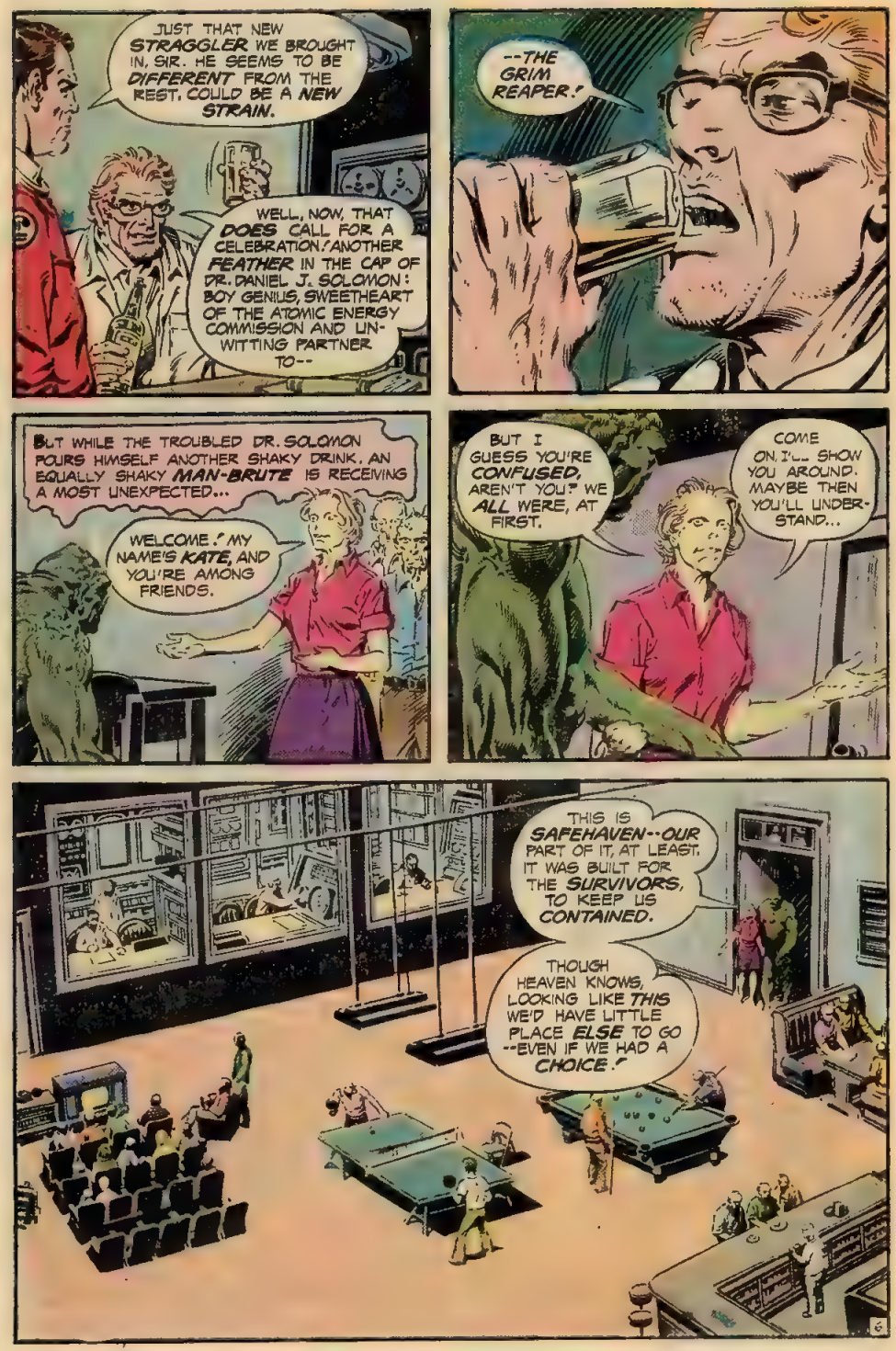
A DAVID MICHELINIE ⁘ NESTOR REDONDO ⁘ JOE ORLANDO PRESENTATION
(WRITER) (ILLUSTRATOR) (EDITOR)


DON'T KNOW WHAT THESE...SPACE-SUITED FANATICS ARE TALKING ABOUT...
...BUT IF THEY THINK I'M GOING TO... STAND STILL WHILE THEY TRUSS ME UP... LIKE A SIDE OF BEEF... THEY'RE WRONG...
DEAD WRONG...!
KRRKRRIKPT
HOLY GEEZ! H-HE'S SNAPPIN' EIGHT-PLY ROPE L-LIKE IT WAS RIBBON!
CARSON QUICK--THE LECTRO-MESH!
WHY DON'T YOU JUST...LEAVE ME ALONE...! I DON'T WANT TO... HURT ANYONE...
BUT THERE'S JUST SO MUCH... A MAN CAN TAKE BEFORE--
KLAMP
HUH?! A NET... A METAL NET...!
ALL RIGHT... THAT DOES IT...! WHEN I GET OUT OF THIS THING... I'M GOING TO--
BUT, UNFORTUNATELY FOR THE ANGERED SWAMP BRUTE, THE KEY WORD IN HIS UNSPOKEN THREAT SHOULD NOT BE "WHEN", BUT--
KLICK

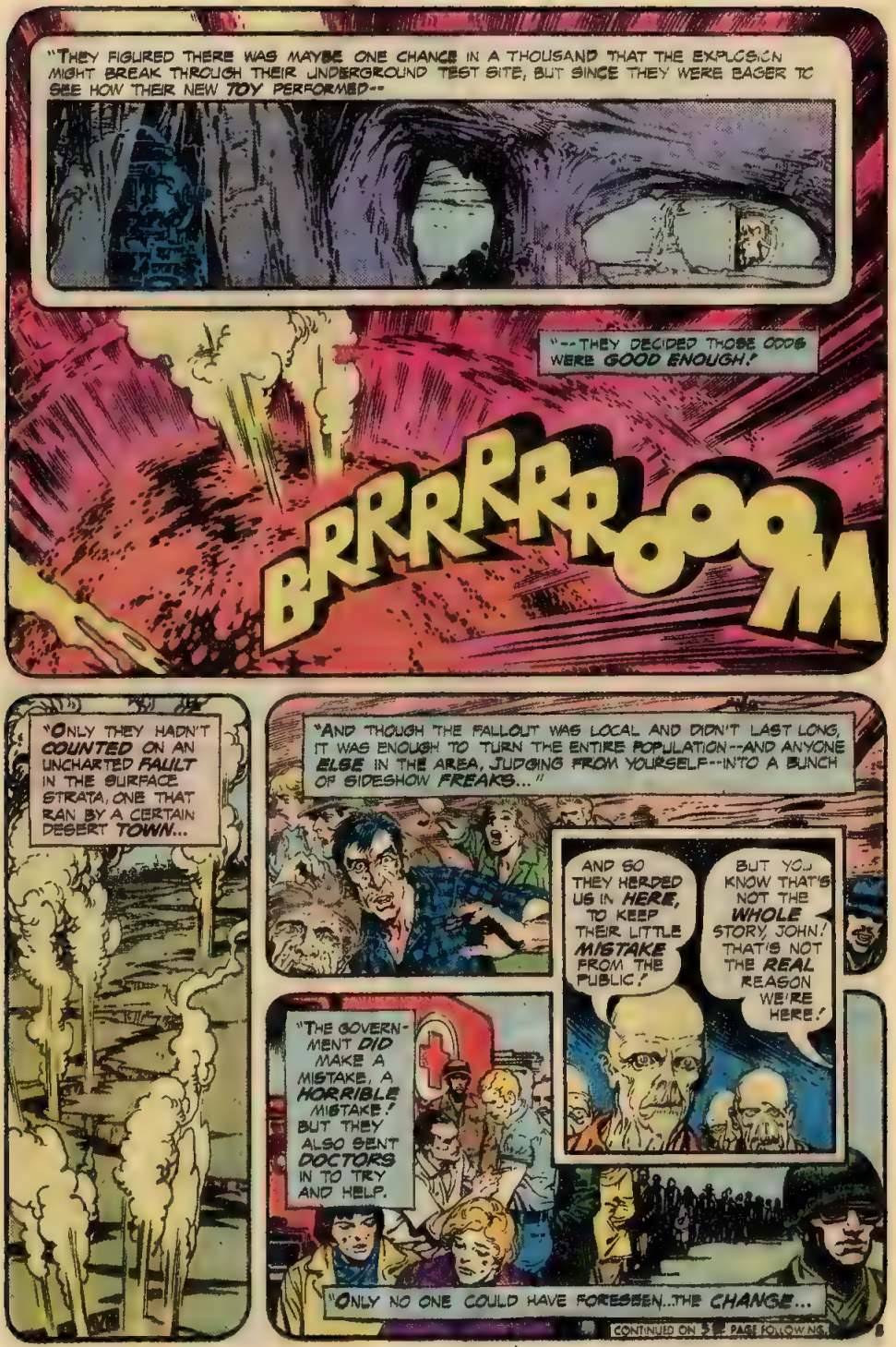

--"IF"!
SSSSHHHZZZZZTT
THE PUNGENT REEK OF SMOLDERING VEGETATION TAINTS THE AIR AS THE STRANGELY-GARBED MEN RETURN, UNHAMPERED, TO THEIR TASK...
...AND LONG, PRECISION HOOKS EXTEND TO PLUCK A HULKING, NOW-STILL FORM FROM THE GRAINY DESERT FLOOR...
AND THEN, PURRING AS IF IN OBSCENE SATISFACTION, THE SLEEK CRAFT RISES AND BEGINS A SWIFT, HOVERING JOURNEY ACROSS THE NIGHT-SHADOWED WASTES...
...A JOURNEY THAT SOON TAKES IT TO A TOWERING, SEEMINGLY UNDISTINGUISHED WALL OF ROCK--
--AND--
--BEYOND!

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

BULLETS OF BLOOD-RED TIME WASH THROUGH THE STUNNED SWAMP THING'S MIND, FLOWING IN STREAMS OF DISJOINTED LIGHT, DISCONNECTED PHRASES...
HE... HE'S NOT ONE OF US, IS HE?
LOOKS LIKE HE'S MADE O' MUD!
YOU THINK MAYBE IT JUST AFFECTED HIM... DIFFERENTLY?
UNTIL AT LAST, AS SENSIBILITIES RETURN...
UNNNN... SOUNDS LIKE VOICES... PEOPLE...
MAYBE THEY CAN TELL ME... JUST WHAT THE-- HUH?!
OH... MY ...DEAR... LORD...
BUT WHILE THE STARTLED MAN-MONSTER ADJUSTS TO THE SHOCK OF HIS NEW SITUATION--
YES, SIR, DR. SOLOMON, THREE MORE VICTIMS EXHIBITING SYMPTOMS OF THE FINAL STAGES OF THE DISEASE--ACUTE PSYCHOPATHIC PARANOIA.
DR DANIEL J. SOLOMON DIRECTOR PROJECT SAFEHAVEN
I'M AFRAID IT'S ONLY A MATTER OF TIME BEFORE THEY'LL HAVE TO BE PLACED UNDER RESTRAINT.
THANK YOU, MORGAN, I CAN ALWAYS COUNT ON YOU FOR GOOD TIDINGS, CAN'T I? NOW PRAY TELL, HAVE YOU ANY MORE LITTLE BULLETINS TO SHARE?

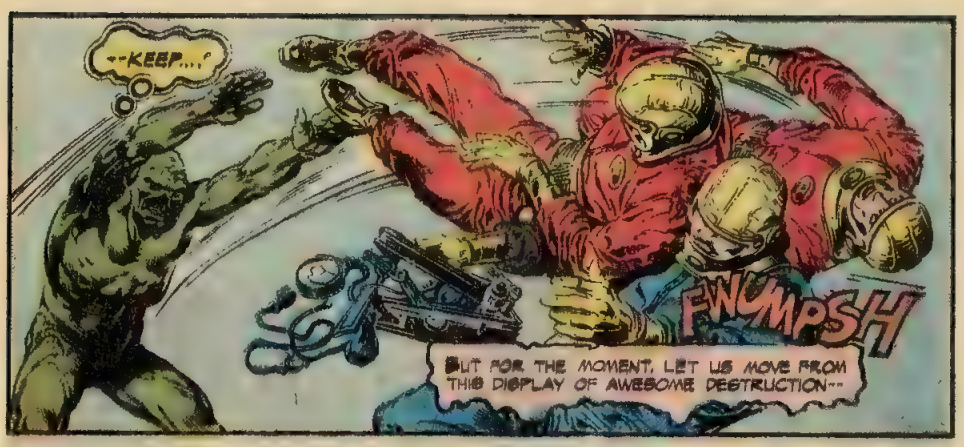

JUST THAT NEW STRAGGLER WE BROUGHT IN, SIR. HE SEEMS TO BE DIFFERENT FROM THE REST. COULD BE A NEW STRAIN.
WELL, NOW, THAT DOES CALL FOR A CELEBRATION! ANOTHER FEATHER IN THE CAP OF DR. DANIEL J. SOLOMON: BOY GENIUS, SWEETHEART OF THE ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION AND UNWITTING PARTNER TO--
--THE GRIM REAPER!
BUT WHILE THE TROUBLED DR. SOLOMON POURS HIMSELF ANOTHER SHAKY DRINK, AN EQUALLY SHAKY MAN-BRUTE IS RECEIVING A MOST UNEXPECTED...
WELCOME! MY NAME'S KATE, AND YOU'RE AMONG FRIENDS.
BUT I GUESS YOU'RE CONFUSED, AREN'T YOU? WE ALL WERE, AT FIRST.
COME ON. I'LL SHOW YOU AROUND. MAYBE THEN YOU'LL UNDERSTAND...
THIS IS SAFEHAVEN--OUR PART OF IT, AT LEAST. IT WAS BUILT FOR THE SURVIVORS, TO KEEP US CONTAINED.
THOUGH HEAVEN KNOWS, LOOKING LIKE THIS WE'D HAVE LITTLE PLACE ELSE TO GO --EVEN IF WE HAD A CHOICE!

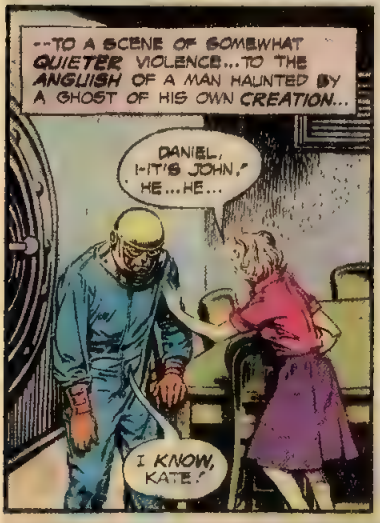
BUT IT'S NOT TOO BAD, ONCE YOU GET USED TO IT. WE'VE GOT RECREATION FACILITIES, A CAFETERIA, ALL THE COMFORTS OF--
--A MINK-LINED PRISON PERHAPS?
JOHN!
YES, MOTHER, WE HEARD ABOUT THE NEW ARRIVAL--AND HOW STRONG HE LOOKED. WE FIGURED HE'D BE PRIME MATERIAL FOR OUR ESCAPE TEAM.
SO, WHADYA SAY, PAL--WANNA GET OUT?
I STILL DON'T KNOW...WHAT'S GOING ON...BUT SINCE I'VE ALWAYS HAD AN AVERSION...TO BEING CAGED...
I GUESS YOU'VE GOT YOURSELF...A RECRUIT...
JOHN, WAIT! H-HE'S NEW! HE DOESN'T KNOW THE DANGER! WHY, HE PROBABLY DOESN'T EVEN REALIZE WHAT'S HAPPENED!
WELL, THAT'S EASILY REMEDIED, MOTHER-DEAR. I'LL JUST EXPLAIN IT TO HIM!
YOU SEE, PAL, ONCE UPON A TIME, THERE WAS THIS GOVERNMENT RESEARCH PROJECT...
"...AND IT SEEMS THEY HAD DEVISED A SPECIAL BOMB, ONE THAT MADE THE H-BOMB LOOK LIKE A FIRE-CRACKER! ONLY THEY DIDN'T KNOW IF IT WOULD WORK--
"--AND THERE WAS JUST ONE WAY TO FIND OUT...

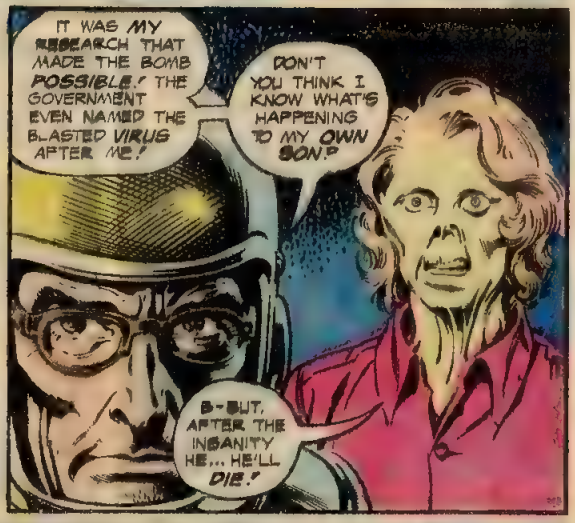

"THEY FIGURED THERE WAS MAYBE ONE CHANCE IN A THOUSAND THAT THE EXPLOSION MIGHT BREAK THROUGH THEIR UNDERGROUND TEST SITE, BUT SINCE THEY WERE EAGER TO SEE HOW THEIR NEW TOY PERFORMED--
"--THEY DECIDED THOSE ODDS WERE GOOD ENOUGH!
BRRRRRRROOOM
"ONLY THEY HADN'T COUNTED ON AN UNCHARTED FAULT IN THE SURFACE STRATA, ONE THAT RAN BY A CERTAIN DESERT TOWN...
"AND THOUGH THE FALLOUT WAS LOCAL AND DIDN'T LAST LONG, IT WAS ENOUGH TO TURN THE ENTIRE POPULATION--AND ANYONE ELSE IN THE AREA, JUDGING FROM YOURSELF--INTO A BUNCH OF SIDESHOW FREAKS..."
AND SO THEY HERDED US IN HERE, TO KEEP THEIR LITTLE MISTAKE FROM THE PUBLIC!
BUT YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT THE WHOLE STORY, JOHN! THAT'S NOT THE REAL REASON WE'RE HERE!
"THE GOVERNMENT DID MAKE A MISTAKE, A HORRIBLE MISTAKE! BUT THEY ALSO SENT DOCTORS IN TO TRY AND HELP.
"ONLY NO ONE COULD HAVE FORESEEN...THE CHANGE...
CONTINUED ON 5 PAGE FOLLOWING

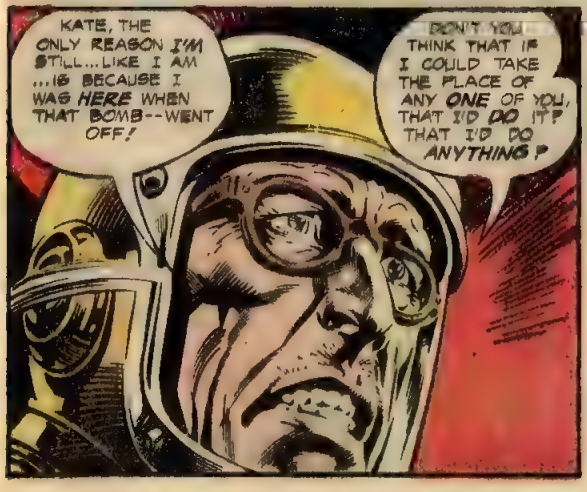
"FOR WHEN OUR BODIES BEGAN TO DETERIORATE, OUR CELLS FORMED A NEW STRAIN OF VIRUS--
"--A TERRIBLE MUTATION THAT BROUGHT AGONIZING DEATH TO ANYONE COMING INTO CONTACT WITH US..."
SO THAT IF EVEN ONE OF US EVER ENTERED A SURFACE CITY, WE'D SET OFF A PLAGUE FROM WHICH THE WORLD MIGHT NEVER RECOVER!
SO WHAT! THOSE JACKASS POLITICIANS IN WASHINGTON ARE PLAYING WITH HUMAN LIVES! AND THE PUBLIC HAS A RIGHT TO KNOW--
--EVEN IF IT KILLS THEM!
TIME PASSES, AS THE FEVERED ARGUMENT AT THE CORE OF SAFE-HAVEN DIES DOWN, UNRESOLVED...
AND SOON, SEVERAL LEVELS ABOVE...
DR. SOLOMON, YOUR WIFE IS WAITING IN THE CONFERENCE ROOM.
THANK YOU, MORGAN.
A LOOK OF ALMOST UNBEARABLE SADNESS ETCHES THE GRIM SCIENTIST'S FEATURES THEN...
...A SADNESS THAT IS SHARED BY THE SLUMP-SHOULDERED STRIDE THAT TAKES HIM TO THE SEALED AND STERILE "CONFERENCE ROOM"...
...AND IS MIRRORED IN THE DOE-LIKE EYES OF THE WOMAN WHO AWAITS HIM THERE...
I'M GLAD YOU'VE COME, DANIEL. I'M AFRAID WE HAVE A LITTLE--

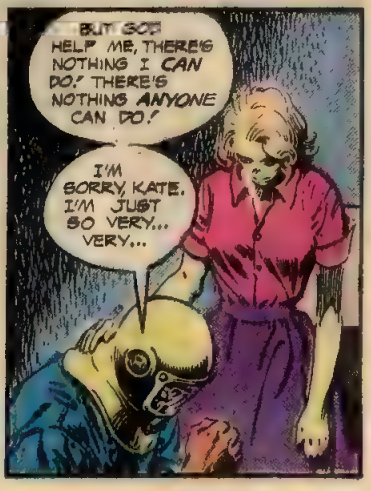
--PROBLEM...
BUT PROBLEMS ARE NOT MERELY CONFINED TO THE UPPER LEVELS OF THE TEEMING RESEARCH COMPLEX, AS WITNESS...
IT'S STRANGE ...AFTER ALL THE HATRED I'VE SEEN...TO FIND PEOPLE WHO ACTUALLY ACCEPT ME...FOR WHAT I AM...
IT WOULD BE SO EASY ...JUST TO STAY HERE ...TO--
THERE HE IS, BOYS. THAT'S THE NEW ONE.
NOW JUST TAKE IT EASY, FRIEND. ALL WE WANT'S A FEW SAMPLES--YOU KNOW, BLOOD, SKIN CELLS, THE USUAL STUFF.
GUESS I WAS JUST FOOLING MYSELF... I CAN'T STAY HERE...
BECAUSE THEY'D JUST FIND OUT... THAT I DON'T HAVE BLOOD ...OR SKIN...
THAT IT'S THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA I DISCOVERED... THAT KEEPS ME ALIVE...
AND KNOWING THE USES...TO WHICH THE MILITARY MIND WOULD PUT THAT DISCOVERY...
HUNH?!
...I'M AFRAID THAT'S ONE LITTLE SECRET... I'M GOING TO HAVE TO--
CONTINUED ON PAGE 19


--KEEP...!
FWUMPSH
BUT FOR THE MOMENT, LET US MOVE FROM THIS DISPLAY OF AWESOME DESTRUCTION--


--TO A SCENE OF SOMEWHAT QUIETER VIOLENCE...TO THE ANGUISH OF A MAN HAUNTED BY A GHOST OF HIS OWN CREATION...
DANIEL, I--IT'S JOHN.' HE...HE...
I KNOW, KATE.'


IT WAS MY RESEARCH THAT MADE THE BOMB POSSIBLE.' THE GOVERNMENT EVEN NAMED THE BLASTED VIRUS AFTER ME.'
DON'T YOU THINK I KNOW WHAT'S HAPPENING TO MY OWN SON?
B--BUT, AFTER THE INSANITY HE... HE'LL DIE.'

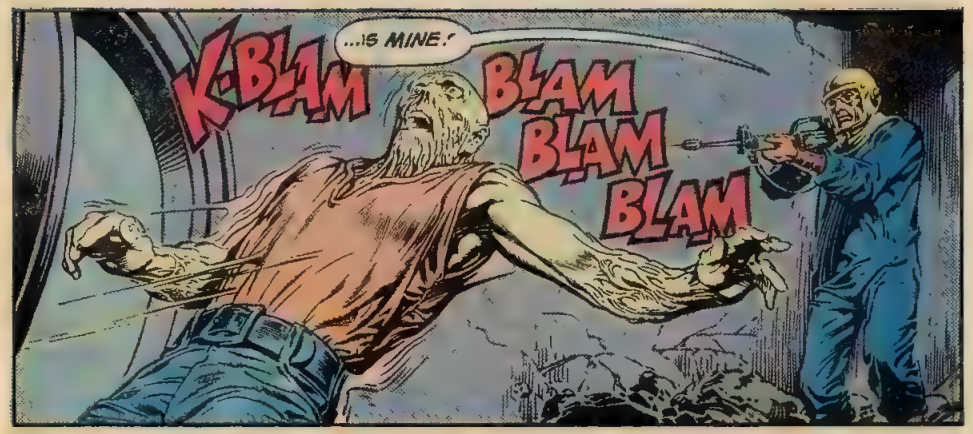

KATE, THE ONLY REASON I'M STILL...LIKE I AM ...IS BECAUSE I WAS HERE WHEN THAT BOMB--WENT OFF.'
DON'T YOU THINK THAT IF I COULD TAKE THE PLACE OF ANY ONE OF YOU, THAT I'D DO IT? THAT I'D DO ANYTHING?

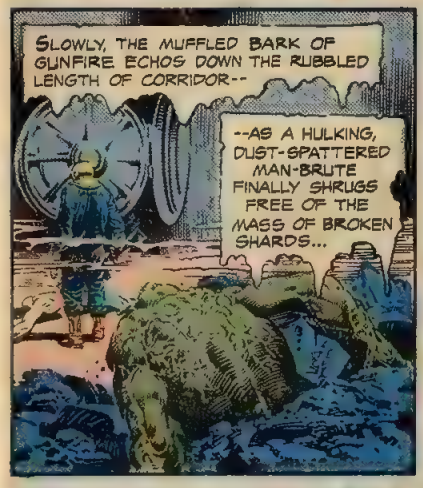

BUT GOD HELP ME, THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO.' THERE'S NOTHING ANYONE CAN DO.'
I'M SORRY, KATE. I'M JUST SO VERY... VERY...

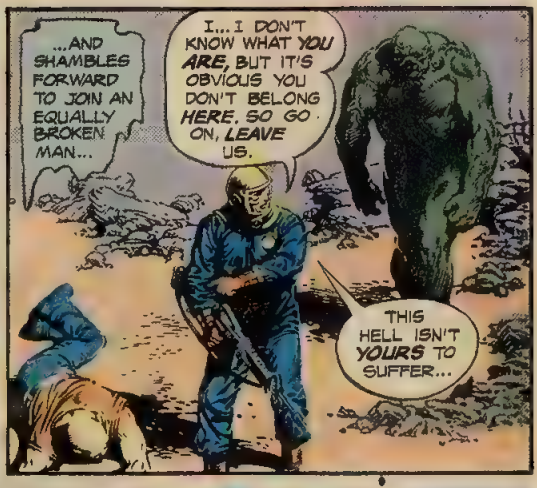
SORRY, DOC ...BUT AFTER SEEING WHAT'S BEEN DONE... TO ALL THESE PEOPLE IN HERE...
BLAM
BLAM
...I'M SURE YOU'LL UNDERSTAND...IF I DON'T GO TO GREAT LENGTHS...
...TO BE GENTLE....'
KRAKEE
ESH
WHILE IN A CORRIDOR NEARBY, A TENSE SENTRY OBSERVES THE GROWING BATTLE, WONDERING IF THIS OBVIOUS STATE OF EMERGENCY WARRANTS THE LEAVING OF HIS ASSIGNED POST...
IT IS A PROBLEM HE WILL NOT HAVE TO PONDER LONG...
FTOK
THE TIME HAS COME, MY BROTHERS! ONLY WE KNOW WHAT MUST BE DONE.'
WE MUST SAVE THE WORLD--BY DESTROYING IT!
KLICK
SAVE!
DESTROY!
SAVE!
DESTROY!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING
12

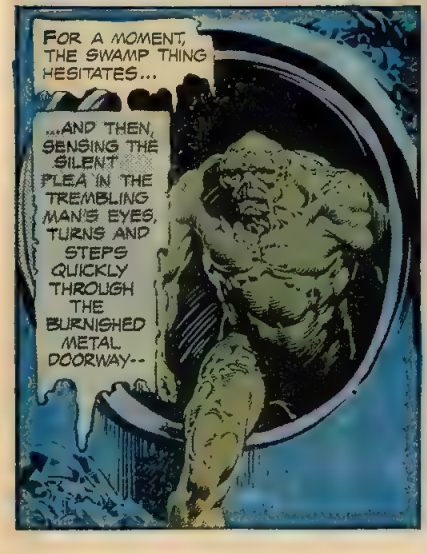
MAYBE IF I CAN GET...AWAY FROM THE LIVING AREA... I CAN FIND SOME WAY... OUT OF THIS MADHOUSE...!
RRRUNCH
BUT IF IT IS BEDLAM THE FLEEING SWAMP THING LEAVES BEHIND, THEN SURELY IT MUST BE INSANITY ITSELF THAT GREETS HIM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SHATTERED DOOR...
SAVE!
DESTROY!
GOOD LORD...!
SAVE!
DESTROY!
WHILE LEVELS ABOVE...
BZZT BZZT
DANIEL, WH-WHAT IS IT?
SOME SORT OF DISTURBANCE, APPARENTLY. I HAVE TO GO, DARLING.
WE'LL FINISH OUR... DISCUSSION LATER.
THAT HOTHEADED KID... TAKING SOME SORT OF KEYS... FROM A FALLEN GUARD...
BETTER TAG ALONG... AND SEE WHAT HE'S UP TO...
AND SO THE MIRY MUCK-MONSTER FOLLOWS, LUMBERING THROUGH CORRIDORS FILLED WITH CHAOS... UNTIL HE FINALLY COMES TO...
FOR EMERGENCY ONLY
A DOOR... LEADING TO THE OUT-SIDE...!
HE MUST HAVE HAD THIS PLANNED... ALL ALONG...!
BUT MUCH AS I SYMPATHIZE WITH THESE PEOPLE... I CAN'T LET THEIR PLAGUE... SPREAD TO THE SURFACE...
I CAN'T ALLOW--

BUT WHAT THE MOSS-WET MOCKERY CAN OR CANNOT ALLOW SOON BECOMES ACADEMIC--
--AS DAMAGED MACHINERY SUDDENLY BRUPTS, BRINGING DOWN PART OF A WEAKENED CEILING WITH IT...
KAPOOMPH
SORRY I CAN'T STOP TO HELP YOU, FRIEND, BUT ONE OF US HAS TO GET OUT AND--
JOHN!
F...FATHER...?
FOR GOD'S SAKE, SON, DON'T DO IT! THE VIRUS HAS ROTTED YOUR BRAIN, BLINDED YOU TO REALITY!
DON'T YOU SEE WHAT WILL HAPPEN IF YOU STEP OUT OF THAT DOOR?
YES, FATHER, I DO SEE! THE WORLD WILL LEARN! THEY'LL REALIZE THE LIBERTIES THEIR GOVERNMENT HAS TAKEN WITH THEIR TAXES, THEIR TRUST--THEIR LIVES!
AND MAYBE THEY'LL DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!
BUT--
SOLOMON
NO, FATHER! IF A FEW MILLION MUST DIE IN THAT LEARNING, THEN SUCH IS THE PRICE OF TRUTH! FOR THE WORLD MUST BE SAVED! IT'S MY... RESPONSIBILITY...
NO, SON...
SOLOMON
...I'M AFRAID THAT RESPONSIBILITY...
14


...IS MINE.'
K-BLAM
BLAM
BLAM
BLAM


SLOWLY, THE MUFFLED BARK OF GUNFIRE ECHOS DOWN THE RUBBLED LENGTH OF CORRIDOR--
--AS A HULKING, DUST-SPATTERED MAN-BRUTE FINALLY SHRUGS FREE OF THE MASS OF BROKEN SHARDS...


...AND SHAMBLES FORWARD TO JOIN AN EQUALLY BROKEN MAN...
I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE, BUT IT'S OBVIOUS YOU DON'T BELONG HERE. SO GO ON, LEAVE US.
THIS HELL ISN'T YOURS TO SUFFER...


FOR A MOMENT, THE SWAMP THING HESITATES...
...AND THEN, SENSING THE SILENT PLEA IN THE TREMBLING MAN'S EYES, TURNS AND STEPS QUICKLY THROUGH THE BURNISHED METAL DOORWAY--

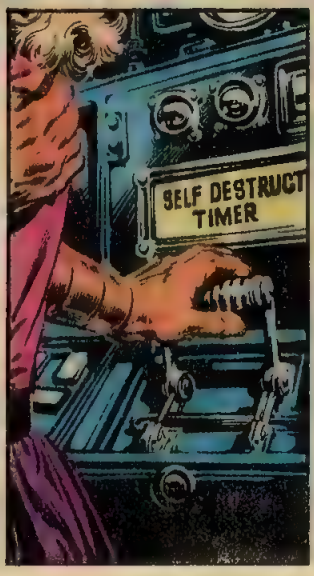
--INTO THE COMFORTING DARK OF THE DESERT NIGHT...
SSSSSSSNNK

AS INSIDE, A TIRED AND BEATEN SCIENTIST MAKES HIS WAY TO THE REMAINS OF A ONCE-GLEAMING LABORATORY, WHERE SOON...
DANIEL! WH-WHAT'S HAPPENING? I'VE BEEN LOOKING ALL OVER FOR--

:GASP: Y-YOUR VISOR! QUICKLY, CLOSE IT BEFORE--
NO, KATE. IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER NOW, YOU SEE, I... I'VE FOUND A CURE!

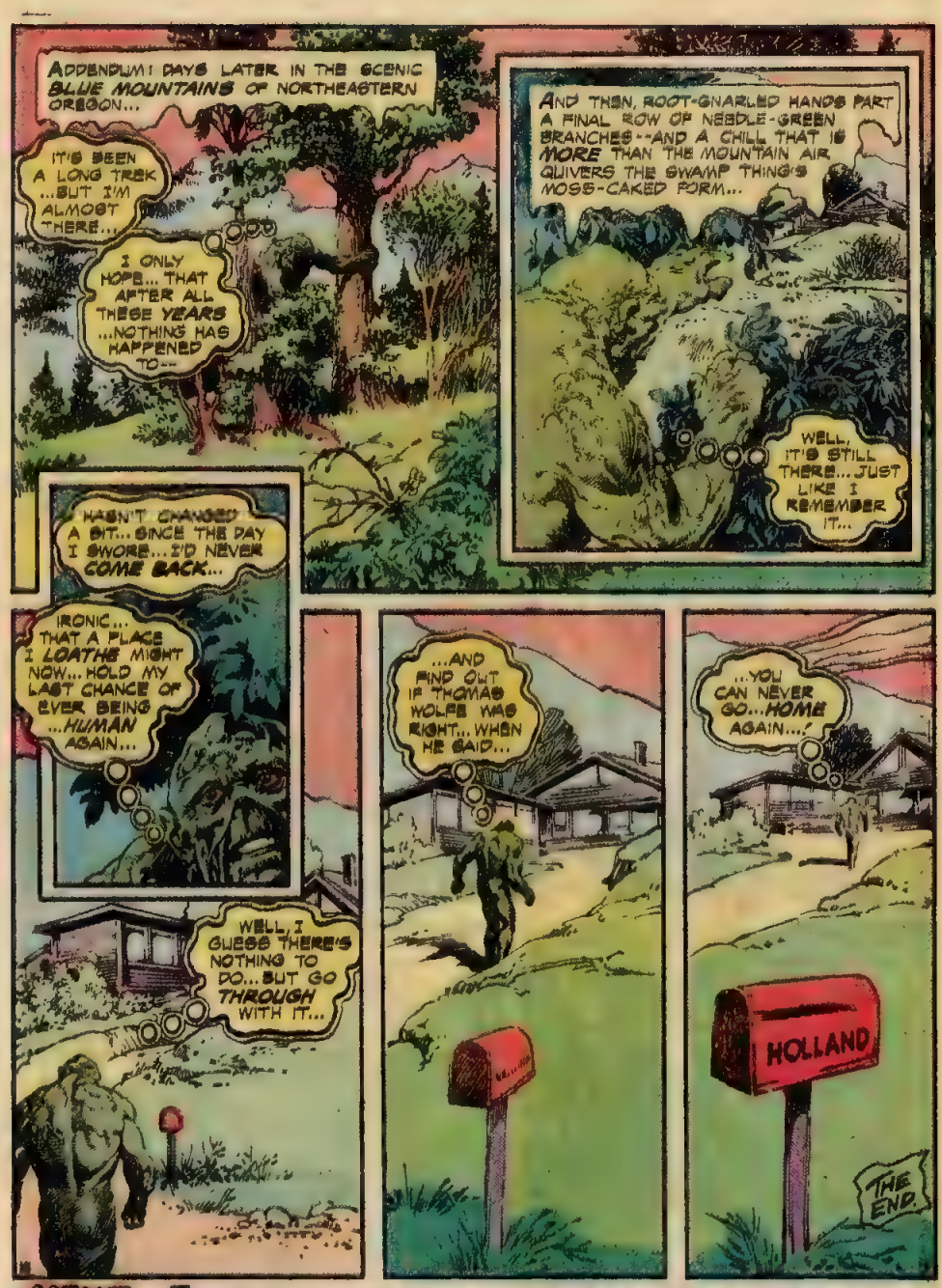
YOU WHAT?! B-BUT, I THOUGHT THE DISEASE WAS--
--TERMINAL? YES, THAT'S WHAT ALL THE TESTS SHOWED. BUT THEN I GOT, WELL, I GUESS YOU COULD CALL IT...AN INSPIRATION.

I FINALLY REALIZED THE ONLY WAY TO END ALL THE PAIN, THE AGONY MY QUEST FOR KNOWLEDGE HAS UNLEASHED ON THESE PITIFULLY INNOCENT PEOPLE.
SO COME, DARLING, AND HOLD ME. I PROMISE IT WILL ALL BE OVER SOON...


SELF DESTRUCT TIMER

ACTIVATED
...VERY SOON...

WHILE ON THE SURFACE, AT THE END OF A LONG TRAIL OF SLIME-GELLED SAND, A MUCK-DRAPED MONSTROSITY PAUSES--
--TURNING TO SPEND ONE LAST GLANCE ON A RANGE OF SINGULARLY IN-CONSPICUOUS MOUNTAINS...
...JUST IN TIME TO SEE THEM BECOME A MOST CONSPICUOUS VALLEY...
CHABALOOM
FOR LONG SECONDS HE STANDS THERE, GRIMLY STARING AT THE THICK SMOKE AND SKITTERING DEBRIS, REMEMBERING THE SOFT GLOW OF FRIENDSHIP AND ACCEPTANCE THAT HAD SO RECENTLY BEEN HIS...
AND IN THAT REMEMBERING, A DECISION IS MADE...
SO THAT AS HE RETURNS TO HIS SHAMBLING STRIDE ONCE MORE, THERE IS AN UNFAMILIAR SURENESS IN HIS STEP. BECAUSE NOW, FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MORE MONTHS THAN HE WOULD CARE TO RECALL--
--THE SWAMP THING HAS SOMEPLACE TO GO...
17


ADDENDUM! DAYS LATER IN THE SCENIC BLUE MOUNTAINS OF NORTHEASTERN OREGON...
IT'S BEEN A LONG TREK ...BUT I'M ALMOST THERE...
I ONLY HOPE... THAT AFTER ALL THESE YEARS ...NOTHING HAS HAPPENED TO--
AND THEN, ROOT-GNARLED HANDS PART A FINAL ROW OF NEEDLE-GREEN BRANCHES--AND A CHILL THAT IS MORE THAN THE MOUNTAIN AIR QUIVERS THE SWAMP THING'S MOSS-CAKED FORM...
WELL, IT'S STILL THERE... JUST LIKE I REMEMBER IT...
HASN'T CHANGED A BIT... SINCE THE DAY I SWORE... I'D NEVER COME BACK...
IRONIC... THAT A PLACE I LOATHE MIGHT NOW... HOLD MY LAST CHANCE OF EVER BEING ...HUMAN AGAIN...
WELL, I GUESS THERE'S NOTHING TO DO... BUT GO THROUGH WITH IT...
...AND FIND OUT IF THOMAS WOLFE WAS RIGHT... WHEN HE SAID...
...YOU CAN NEVER GO... HOME AGAIN...!
HOLLAND
THE END.

NEXT: INTRODUCING THE MAN CALLED SABRE--IN--

"REBIRTH AND NIGHTMARE"

WITH STARTLING NEW DEVELOPMENTS IN THE LIFE OF DR. ALEC HOLLAND

(THAT'S RIGHT, READER--DR. ALEC HOLLAND--NOT SWAMP THING!)

ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN MARCH

SWAMP THING
THE LINE OF
DC
SUPER-STARS
THIS IS THE BIG ONE!
"REBIRTH AND NIGHTMARE."
30c
NO. 23
JULY
30686
BECAUSE YOU ASKED FOR IT!
THE NEW
SWAMP THING
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NO, SABRE--DON'T KILL HIM!
CAN'T YOU SEE? SWAMP THING IS BECOMING HUMAN...
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BEGINNING A NEW EPISODE IN...
THE SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING
FAR BENEATH THE STREETS OF A QUIET MIDWESTERN AMERICAN CITY, A SAVAGE VOICE CRIES OUT IN ANGER --AND A SHATTERING CRASH PUNCTUATES THE CRY--
--FILLING A STREAM-LINED CHAMBER WITH SOUND AND FURY!
I TELL YOU, THE SWAMP THING MUST DIE!
DIE-- DIE-- DIE!
REBIRTH
KARASS
AND
NIGHTMARE
A GERRY CONWAY (WRITER) * NESTOR REDONDO (ARTIST) * JOE ORLANDO (EDITOR) PRESENTATION

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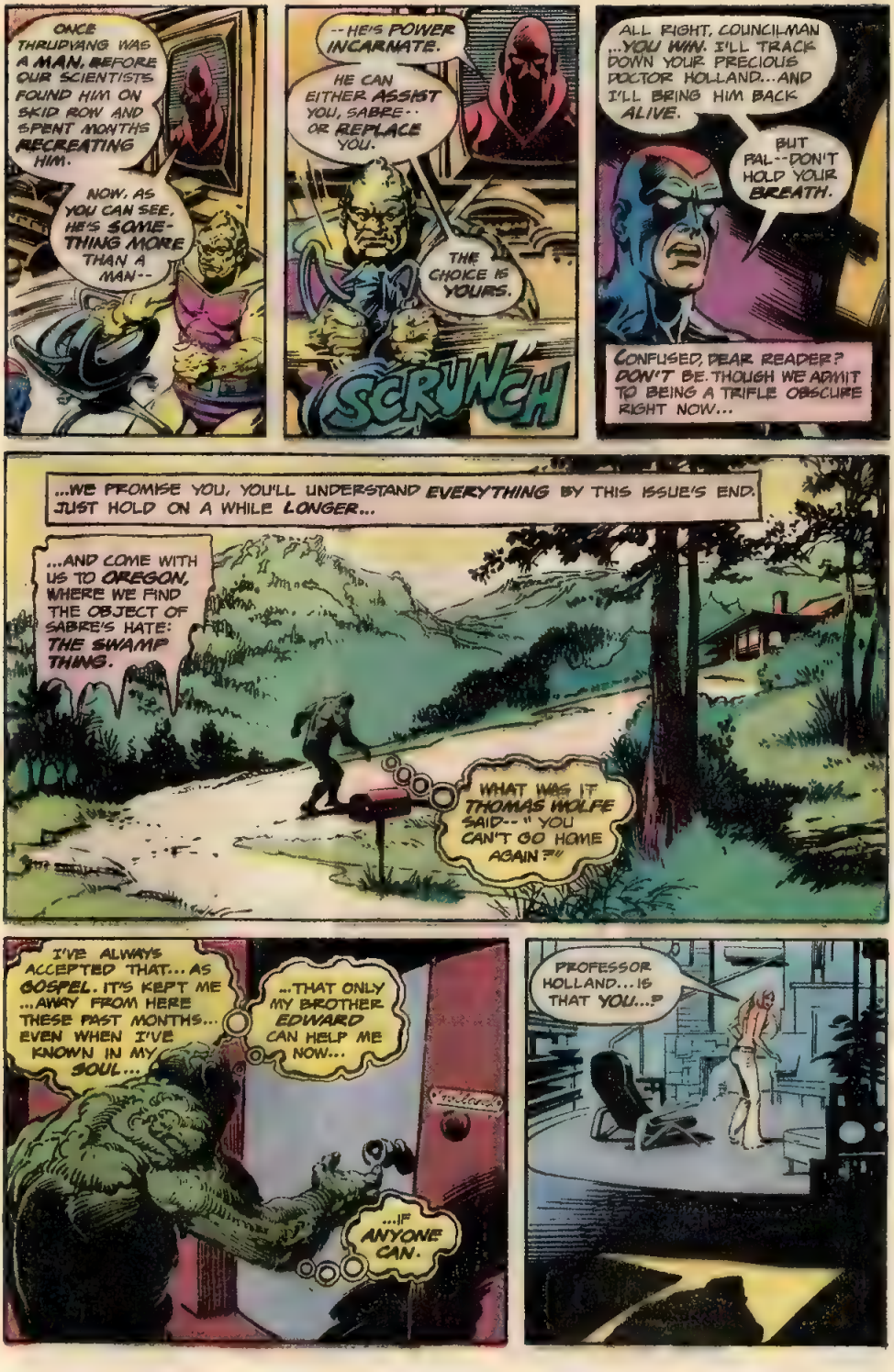
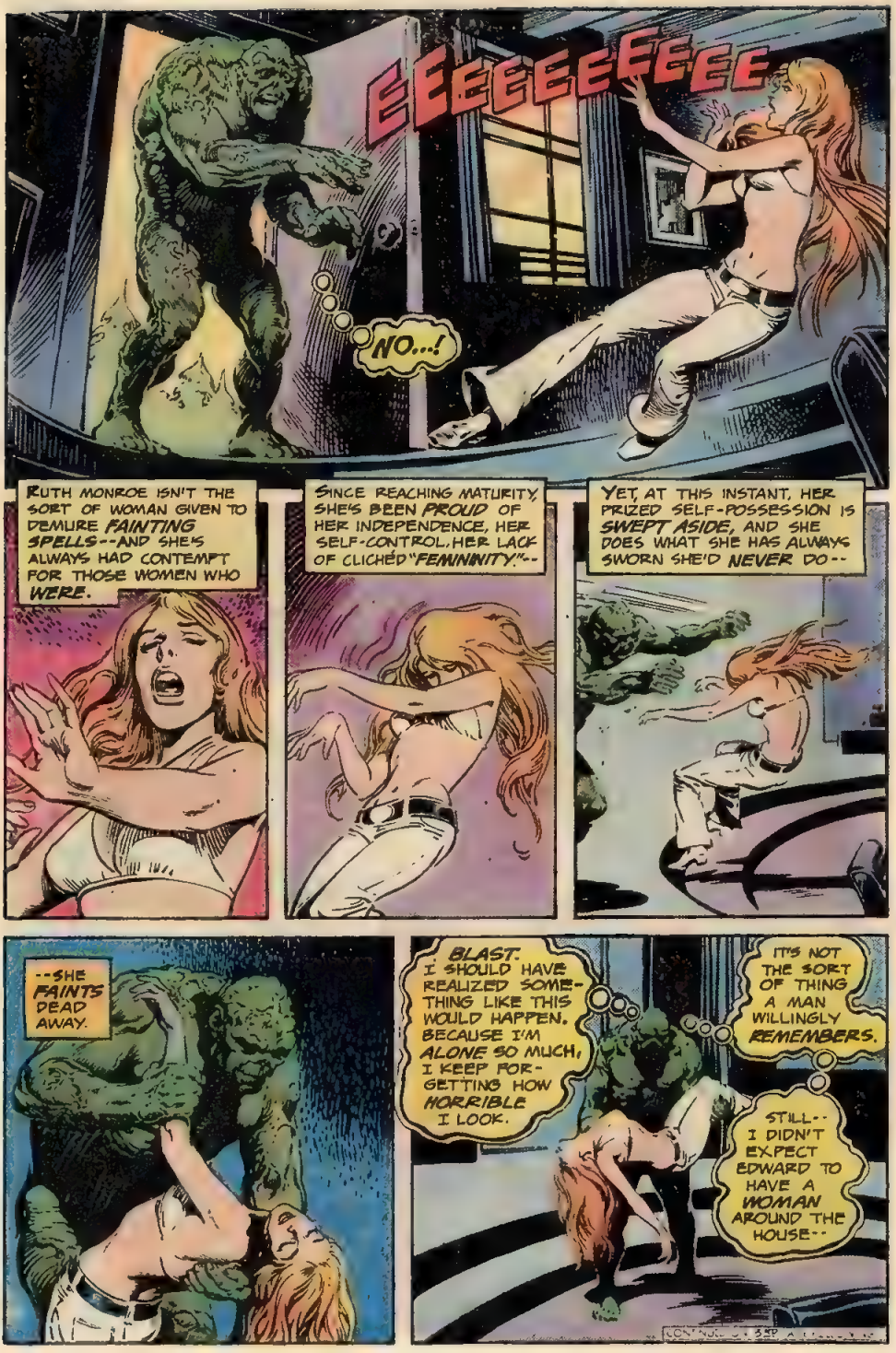
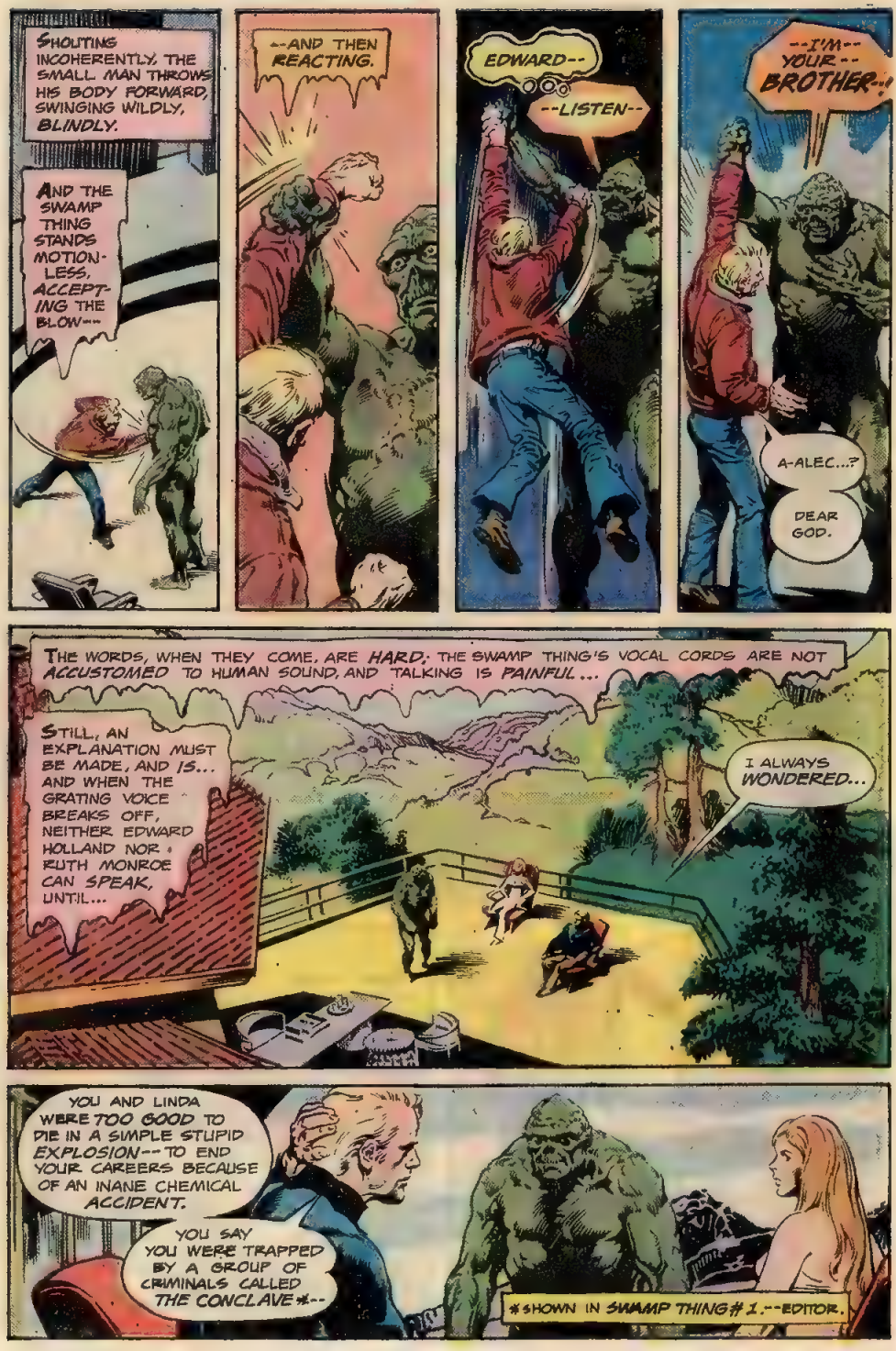
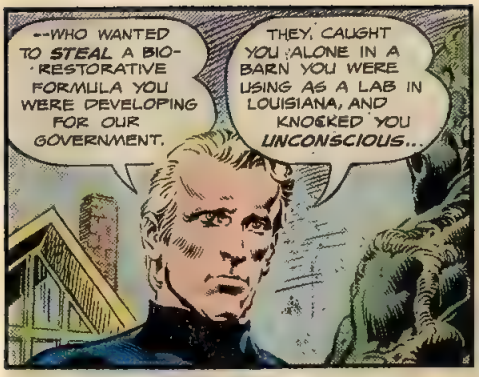
PLEASE, SABRE-- CONTROL YOURSELF. YOU'RE WORKING FOR THE "COLOSSUS" ORGANIZATION NOW, NOT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.
THERE ARE MATTERS AT STAKE HERE WHICH GO FAR BEYOND YOUR PETTY PERSONAL VENDETTA.
NOT SO, COUNCILMAN RED.
AS YOUR CHIEF ENFORCER, I TELL YOU--THE SWAMP THING IS A DANGER TO US, AND MUST BE DESTROYED!
NONSENSE. IF THE SWAMP CREATURE DIES, SO DOES HIS ALTER EGO, DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND--
--AND IF HOLLAND DIES, HIS BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA DIES ALSO.
THE SWAMP THING MUST BE CAPTURED, SABRE-- ALIVE.
NO!
CRASSSH
BECAUSE OF HIM, I LOST MY CAREER-- MY HONOR --AND MY HAND.
IF YOU THINK I'VE JOINED "COLOSSUS" JUST TO SEE MY WORST ENEMY CODDLED, THEN--
SILENCE!
WE COMMISSIONED YOU TO CATCH ALEC HOLLAND, SABRE--BUT IF YOU REFUSE, WE CAN ALWAYS TURN TO OUR NEWEST AGENTS, THE ELEMENTALS--
WHRRRR
?
--SUCH AS THRUDVANG, THE EARTH MASTER!
DEAR GOD...

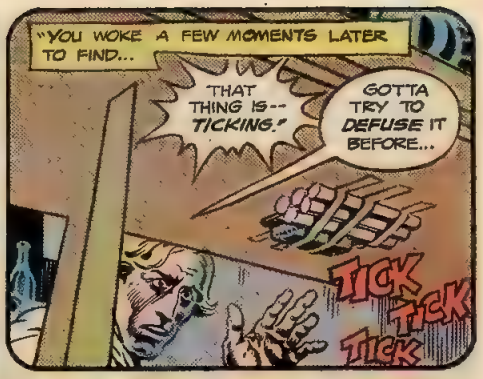

ONCE THRUDVANG WAS A MAN. BEFORE OUR SCIENTISTS FOUND HIM ON SKID ROW AND SPENT MONTHS RECREATING HIM.
NOW, AS YOU CAN SEE, HE'S SOMETHING MORE THAN A MAN--
--HE'S POWER INCARNATE.
HE CAN EITHER ASSIST YOU, SABRE-- OR REPLACE YOU.
THE CHOICE IS YOURS.
SCRUNCH
ALL RIGHT, COUNCILMAN ...YOU WIN. I'LL TRACK DOWN YOUR PRECIOUS DOCTOR HOLLAND...AND I'LL BRING HIM BACK ALIVE.
BUT PAL--DON'T HOLD YOUR BREATH.
CONFUSED, DEAR READER? DON'T BE. THOUGH WE ADMIT TO BEING A TRIFLE OBSCURE RIGHT NOW...
...WE PROMISE YOU, YOU'LL UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING BY THIS ISSUE'S END. JUST HOLD ON A WHILE LONGER...
...AND COME WITH US TO OREGON, WHERE WE FIND THE OBJECT OF SABRE'S HATE: THE SWAMP THING.
WHAT WAS IT THOMAS WOLFE SAID-- "YOU CAN'T GO HOME AGAIN?"
I'VE ALWAYS ACCEPTED THAT... AS GOSPEL. IT'S KEPT ME ...AWAY FROM HERE THESE PAST MONTHS... EVEN WHEN I'VE KNOWN IN MY SOUL...
...THAT ONLY MY BROTHER EDWARD CAN HELP ME NOW...
...IF ANYONE CAN.
PROFESSOR HOLLAND...IS THAT YOU...?

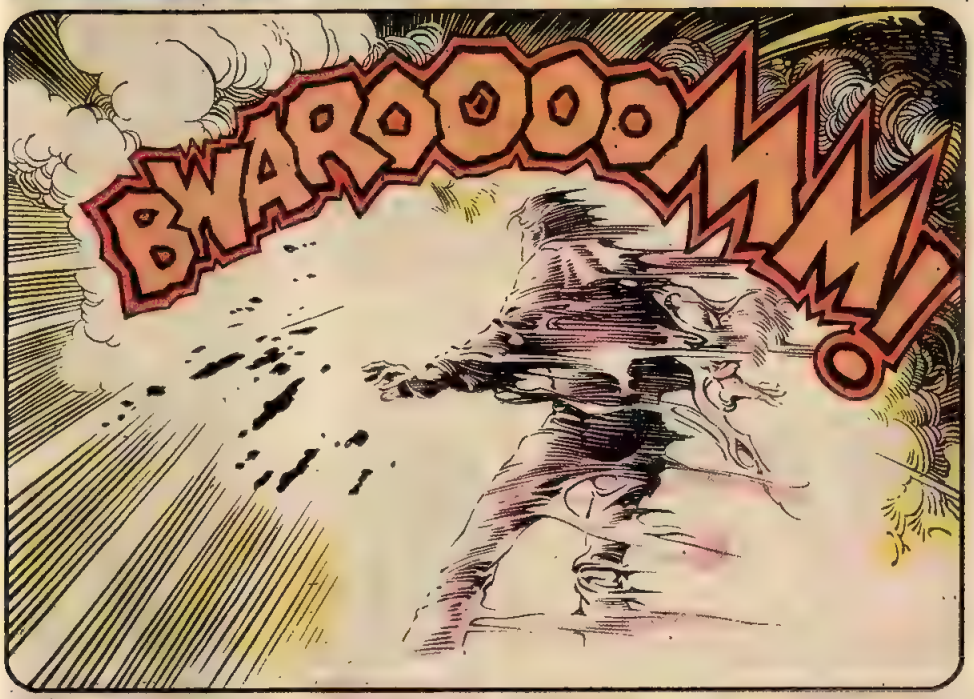

EEEEEEEEEEE
NO...!
RUTH MONROE ISN'T THE SORT OF WOMAN GIVEN TO DEMURE FAINTING SPELLS--AND SHE'S ALWAYS HAD CONTEMPT FOR THOSE WOMEN WHO WERE.
SINCE REACHING MATURITY, SHE'S BEEN PROUD OF HER INDEPENDENCE, HER SELF-CONTROL, HER LACK OF CLICHÉD "FEMININITY."--
YET, AT THIS INSTANT, HER PRIZED SELF-POSSESSION IS SWEPT ASIDE, AND SHE DOES WHAT SHE HAS ALWAYS SWORN SHE'D NEVER DO--
--SHE FAINTS DEAD AWAY.
BLAST. I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED SOMETHING LIKE THIS WOULD HAPPEN. BECAUSE I'M ALONE SO MUCH, I KEEP FORGETTING HOW HORRIBLE I LOOK.
IT'S NOT THE SORT OF THING A MAN WILLINGLY REMEMBERS.
STILL-- I DIDN'T EXPECT EDWARD TO HAVE A WOMAN AROUND THE HOUSE--

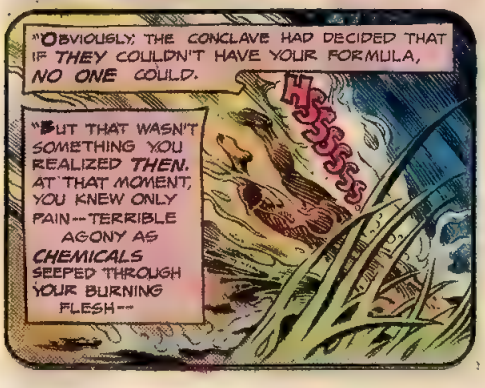
--AND NOT SUCH AN ATTRACTIVE WOMAN, AT THAT.
ODD. SHE REMINDS ME OF LINDA SOMEHOW...
HER SKIN'S SOFT... HER HAIR'S THE SAME STRAW COLOR...
SMASH
GOOD LORD! WHAT ON EARTH--?
EDWARD!
RUTH! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE TO HER? SO HELP ME, IF SHE'S--
WAIT--!

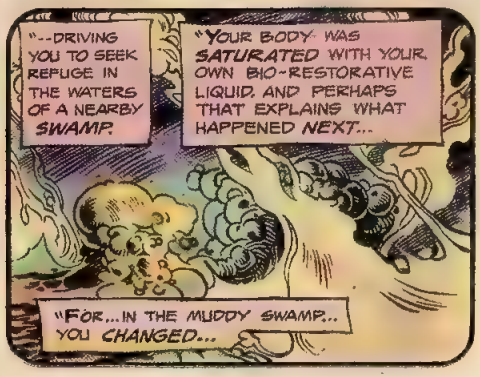

SHOUTING INCOHERENTLY, THE SMALL MAN THROWS HIS BODY FORWARD, SWINGING WILDLY, BLINDLY.
AND THE SWAMP THING STANDS MOTIONLESS, ACCEPTING THE BLOW--
--AND THEN REACTING.
EDWARD--
--LISTEN--
--I'M-- YOUR-- BROTHER--!
A-ALEC...?
DEAR GOD.
THE WORDS, WHEN THEY COME, ARE HARD; THE SWAMP THING'S VOCAL CORDS ARE NOT ACCUSTOMED TO HUMAN SOUND, AND TALKING IS PAINFUL...
STILL, AN EXPLANATION MUST BE MADE, AND IS... AND WHEN THE GRATING VOICE BREAKS OFF, NEITHER EDWARD HOLLAND NOR RUTH MONROE CAN SPEAK, UNTIL...
I ALWAYS WONDERED...
YOU AND LINDA WERE TOO GOOD TO DIE IN A SIMPLE STUPID EXPLOSION--TO END YOUR CAREERS BECAUSE OF AN INANE CHEMICAL ACCIDENT.
YOU SAY YOU WERE TRAPPED BY A GROUP OF CRIMINALS CALLED THE CONCLAVE*--
*SHOWN IN SWAMP THING #1.--EDITOR.

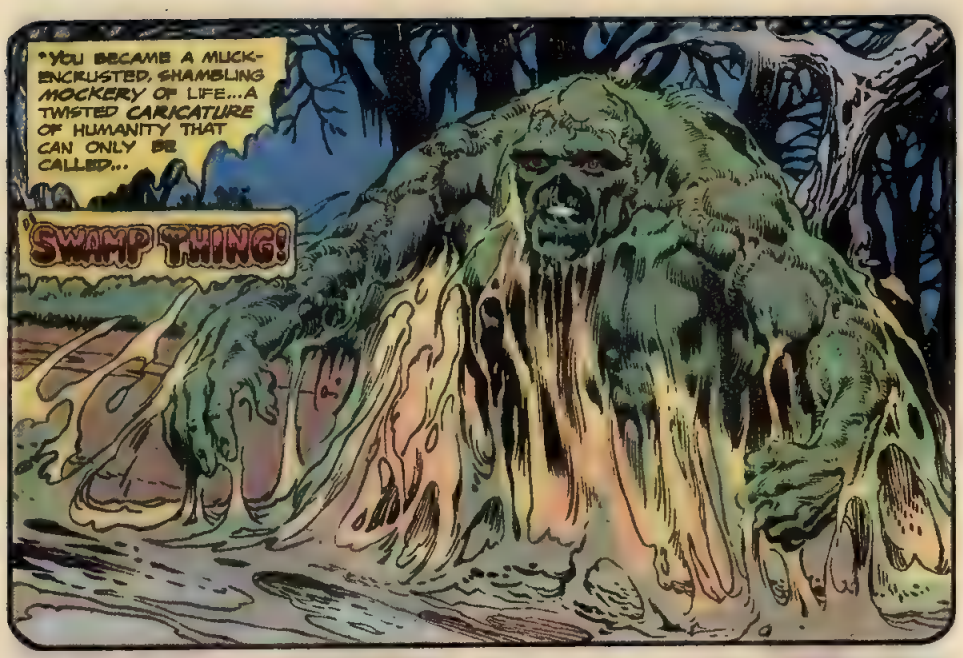

--WHO WANTED TO STEAL A BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA YOU WERE DEVELOPING FOR OUR GOVERNMENT.
THEY CAUGHT YOU ALONE IN A BARN YOU WERE USING AS A LAB IN LOUISIANA, AND KNOCKED YOU UNCONSCIOUS...

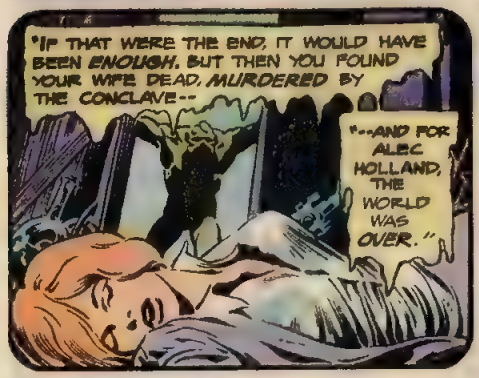

"YOU WOKE A FEW MOMENTS LATER TO FIND...
THAT THING IS-- TICKING!
GOTTA TRY TO DEFUSE IT BEFORE...
TICK TICK TICK

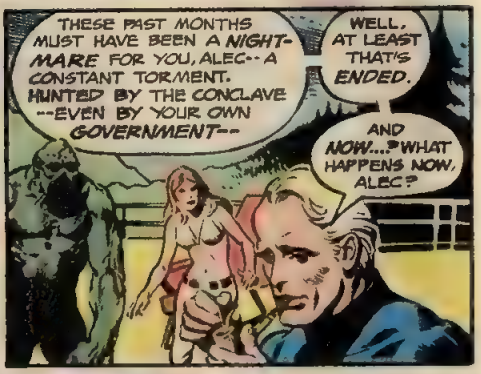

BWAROOOOMM!

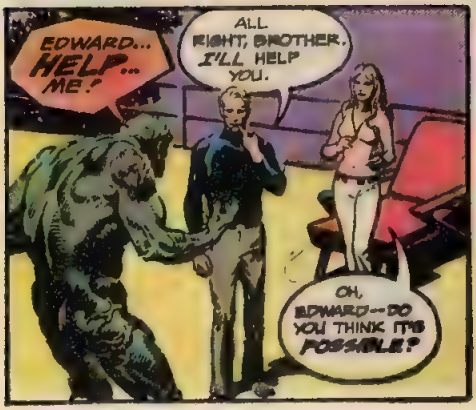

"OBVIOUSLY, THE CONCLAVE HAD DECIDED THAT IF THEY COULDN'T HAVE YOUR FORMULA, NO ONE COULD.
HSSSSSS
"BUT THAT WASN'T SOMETHING YOU REALIZED THEN. AT THAT MOMENT, YOU KNEW ONLY PAIN--TERRIBLE AGONY AS CHEMICALS SEEPED THROUGH YOUR BURNING FLESH--

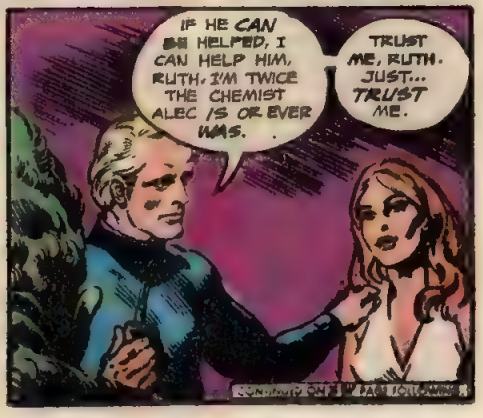

"--DRIVING YOU TO SEEK REFUGE IN THE WATERS OF A NEARBY SWAMP.
"YOUR BODY WAS SATURATED WITH YOUR OWN BIO-RESTORATIVE LIQUID, AND PERHAPS THAT EXPLAINS WHAT HAPPENED NEXT...
"FOR...IN THE MUDDY SWAMP... YOU CHANGED...

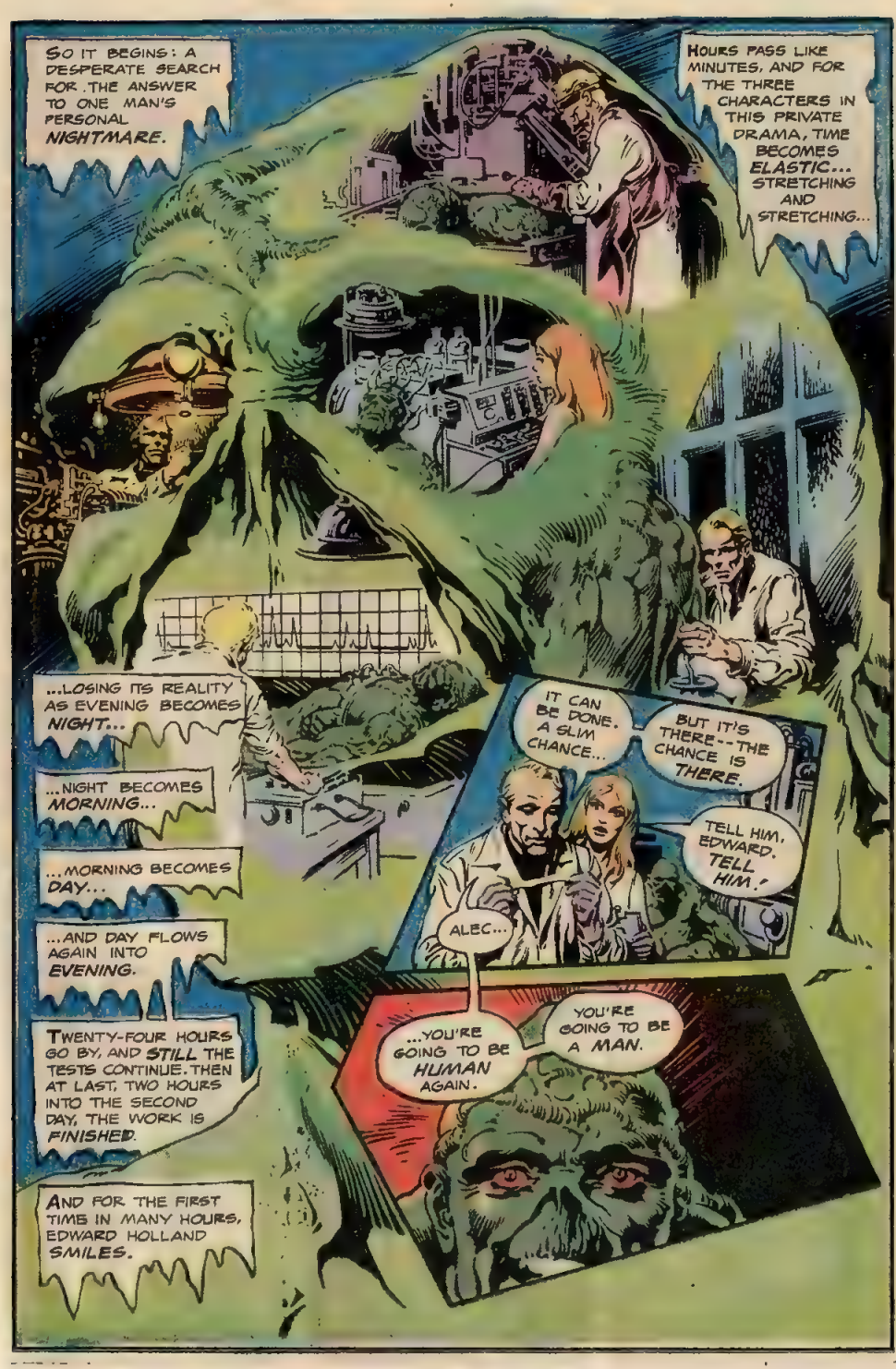

"YOU BECAME A MUCK-ENCRUSTED, SHAMBLING MOCKERY OF LIFE...A TWISTED CARICATURE OF HUMANITY THAT CAN ONLY BE CALLED...
"SWAMP THING!


"IF THAT WERE THE END, IT WOULD HAVE BEEN ENOUGH. BUT THEN YOU FOUND YOUR WIFE DEAD, MURDERED BY THE CONCLAVE--
"--AND FOR ALEC HOLLAND, THE WORLD WAS OVER."


THESE PAST MONTHS MUST HAVE BEEN A NIGHT-MARE FOR YOU, ALEC--A CONSTANT TORMENT. HUNTED BY THE CONCLAVE --EVEN BY YOUR OWN GOVERNMENT--
WELL, AT LEAST THAT'S ENDED.
AND NOW...? WHAT HAPPENS NOW, ALEC?

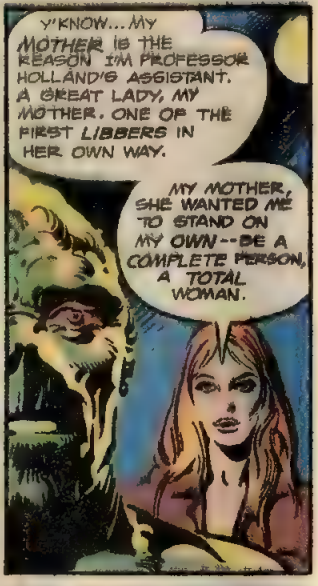

EDWARD... HELP... ME!
ALL RIGHT, BROTHER. I'LL HELP YOU.
OH, EDWARD--DO YOU THINK IT'S POSSIBLE?

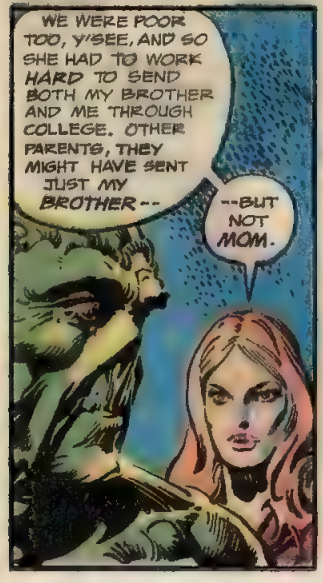

IF HE CAN BE HELPED, I CAN HELP HIM, RUTH. I'M TWICE THE CHEMIST ALEC IS OR EVER WAS.
TRUST ME, RUTH. JUST... TRUST ME.


SO IT BEGINS: A DESPERATE SEARCH FOR THE ANSWER TO ONE MAN'S PERSONAL NIGHTMARE.
HOURS PASS LIKE MINUTES, AND FOR THE THREE CHARACTERS IN THIS PRIVATE DRAMA, TIME BECOMES ELASTIC... STRETCHING AND STRETCHING...
...LOSING ITS REALITY AS EVENING BECOMES NIGHT...
...NIGHT BECOMES MORNING...
...MORNING BECOMES DAY...
...AND DAY FLOWS AGAIN INTO EVENING.
TWENTY-FOUR HOURS GO BY, AND STILL THE TESTS CONTINUE. THEN AT LAST, TWO HOURS INTO THE SECOND DAY, THE WORK IS FINISHED.
AND FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MANY HOURS, EDWARD HOLLAND SMILES.
IT CAN BE DONE. A SLIM CHANCE...
BUT IT'S THERE--THE CHANCE IS THERE.
TELL HIM, EDWARD. TELL HIM!
ALEC...
...YOU'RE GOING TO BE HUMAN AGAIN.
YOU'RE GOING TO BE A MAN.

SLOWLY, WEARILY, THE SWAMP THING NODS... AND THEN HIS HEAVY BODY TURNS AND LEAVES THE BASEMENT LABORATORY...
HIS SHOULDERS SEEM BENT BY SOME GREAT WEIGHT, AND HIS EYES ARE BLEAK AND COLD...
...NOT AT ALL THE EYES OF A MAN WHO SEES SALVATION...

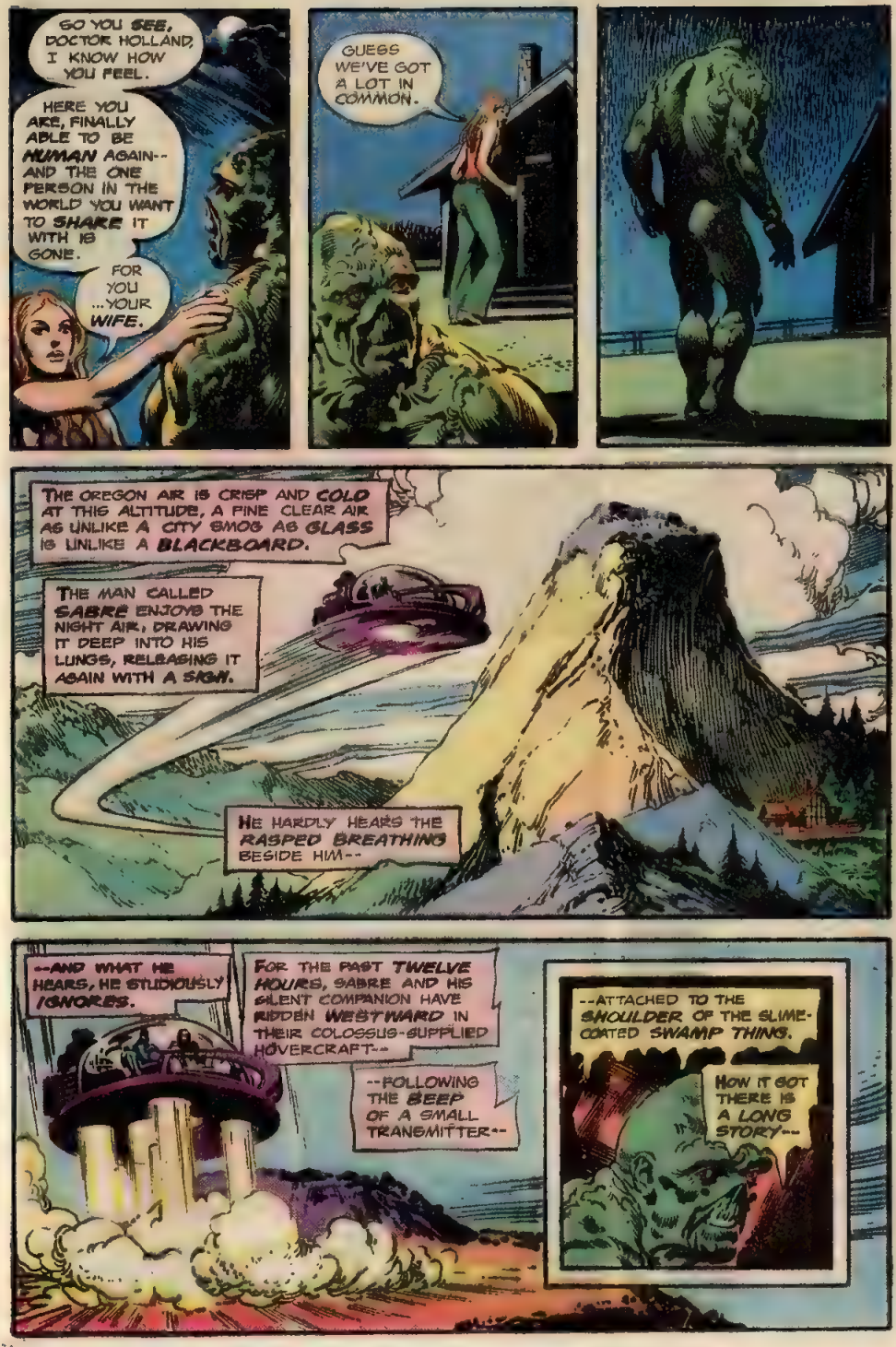
MIND IF I... JOIN YOU, DOCTOR HOLLAND?


Y'KNOW... MY MOTHER IS THE REASON I'M PROFESSOR HOLLAND'S ASSISTANT. A GREAT LADY, MY MOTHER. ONE OF THE FIRST LIBBERS IN HER OWN WAY.
MY MOTHER, SHE WANTED ME TO STAND ON MY OWN--BE A COMPLETE PERSON, A TOTAL WOMAN.


WE WERE POOR TOO, Y'SEE, AND SO SHE HAD TO WORK HARD TO SEND BOTH MY BROTHER AND ME THROUGH COLLEGE. OTHER PARENTS, THEY MIGHT HAVE SENT JUST MY BROTHER--
--BUT NOT MOM.

SHE WANTED TO GIVE US BOTH A CHANCE TO BE THE BEST WE COULD BE. AND SHE GAVE US THAT CHANCE.
A YEAR AGO, I GRADUATED MAGNA CUM LAUDE IN BIO-CHEMISTRY--AND I'M WORKING ON MY MASTERS DEGREE, HERE WITH YOUR BROTHER.
BUT MY MOTHER...

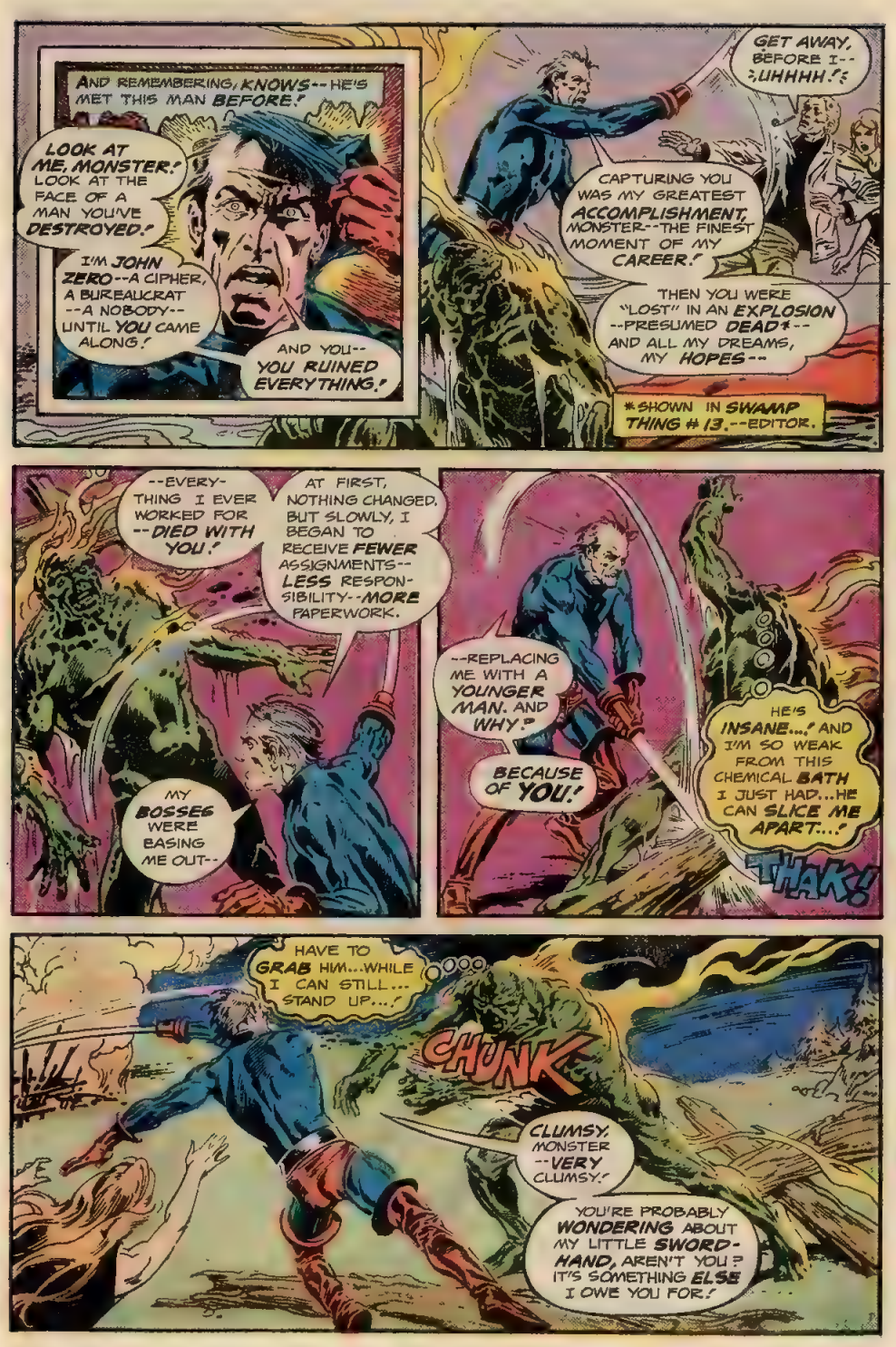
...MY MOTHER DIED A MONTH BEFORE MY GRADUATION...
CONTINUED ON PAGE 40

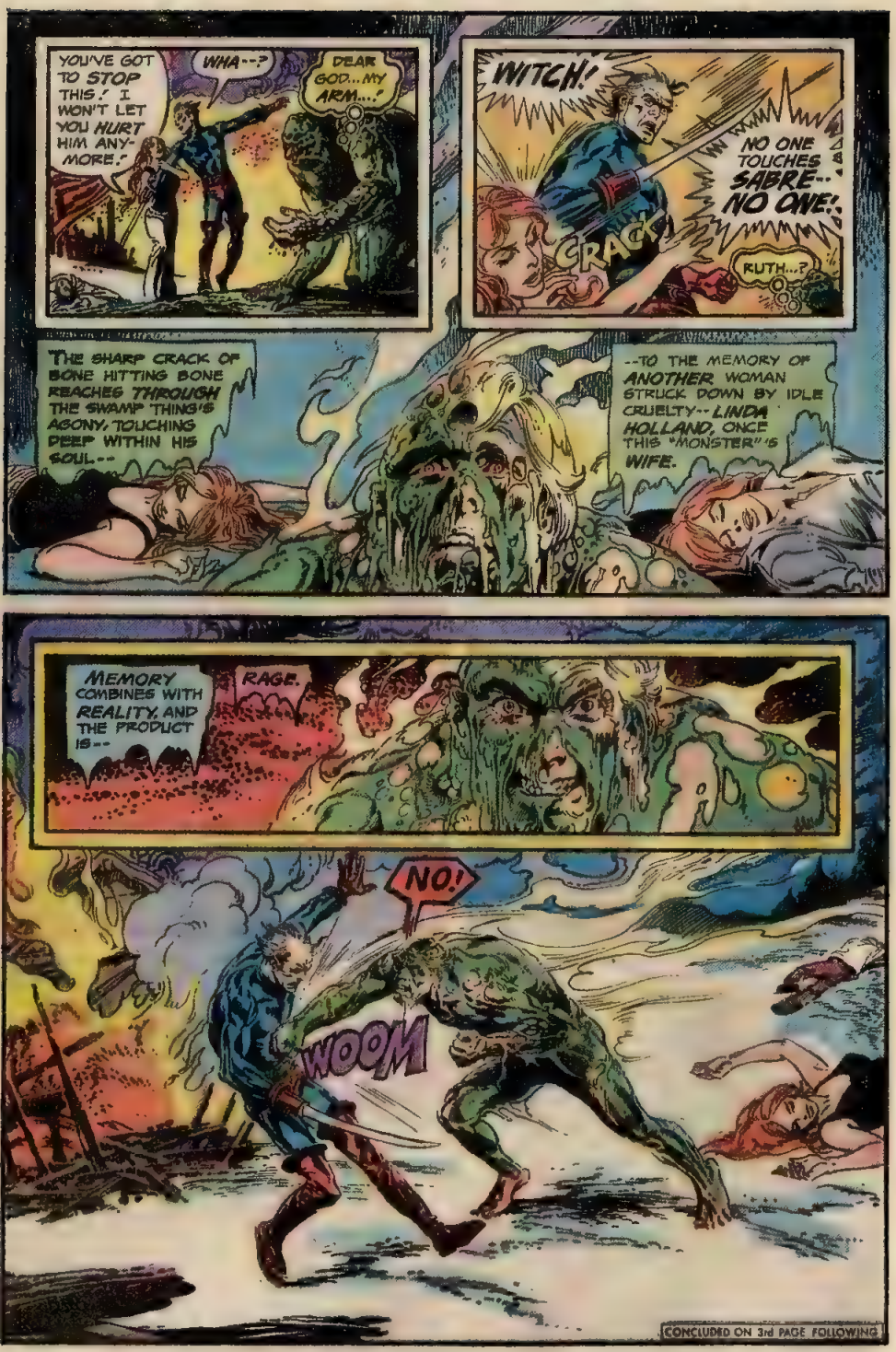

SO YOU SEE, DOCTOR HOLLAND, I KNOW HOW YOU FEEL.
HERE YOU ARE, FINALLY ABLE TO BE HUMAN AGAIN-- AND THE ONE PERSON IN THE WORLD YOU WANT TO SHARE IT WITH IS GONE.
FOR YOU ...YOUR WIFE.
GUESS WE'VE GOT A LOT IN COMMON.
THE OREGON AIR IS CRISP AND COLD AT THIS ALTITUDE, A PINE CLEAR AIR AS UNLIKE A CITY SMOG AS GLASS IS UNLIKE A BLACKBOARD.
THE MAN CALLED SABRE ENJOYS THE NIGHT AIR, DRAWING IT DEEP INTO HIS LUNGS, RELEASING IT AGAIN WITH A SIGH.
HE HARDLY HEARS THE RASPED BREATHING BESIDE HIM--
--AND WHAT HE HEARS, HE STUDIOUSLY IGNORES.
FOR THE PAST TWELVE HOURS, SABRE AND HIS SILENT COMPANION HAVE RIDDEN WESTWARD IN THEIR COLOSSUS-SUPPLIED HOVERCRAFT--
--FOLLOWING THE BEEP OF A SMALL TRANSMITTER--
--ATTACHED TO THE SHOULDER OF THE SLIME-COATED SWAMP THING.
HOW IT GOT THERE IS A LONG STORY--

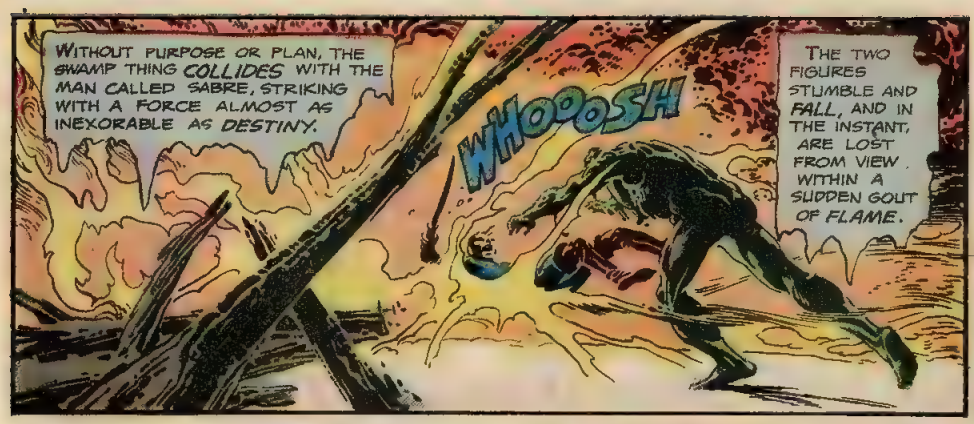
--AND AT THE MOMENT, DOESN'T REALLY MATTER. SUFFICE TO SAY, THE AGENTS OF COLOSSUS ARE UBIQUITOUS--THEY'RE EVERYWHERE.
I COULD TAKE YOU NOW, SWAMP BEAST, BUT I WON'T. WITH YOUR BROTHER INVOLVED, THE STAKES HAVE BECOME SOMEWHAT HIGHER.
LET'S JUST WAIT A FEW DAYS.
I'VE GOT ALL THE TIME IN THE WORLD...
THE COLLEGE TOWN OF QUIN, OREGON... A PLEASANT HAMLET NESTLED IN A VALLEY AWAY FROM THE WORLD... PERHAPS NOT THE MOST STUDIOUS ACADEMIC COMMUNITY IN THE COUNTRY...
...BUT CERTAINLY, ONE OF THE MOST RELAXED.
--LOT OF STUFF YOU GOT HERE, MS. MONROE.
THAT'S NOT THE END OF IT, NED. PROFESSOR HOLLAND NEEDS SOME MORE CHEMICALS--ON ORDER FROM A PHARMACEUTICAL COMPANY BACK EAST--
--AND THERE'S THE MATTER OF THIS DYNA-MITE.
"DYNAMITE?"
NED...
YOU'VE GOT TO GET US FIVE STICKS OF DYNAMITE FROM YOUR FATHER'S FARM. IT'S A LOT TO ASK, I KNOW--BUT IT'S DREADFULLY IMPORTANT.
HE'LL KILL ME IF HE FINDS OUT, MS. MONROE.
WHO'LL TELL HIM--YOU?
OK, MS. MONROE--I'LL GET YOUR DYNAMITE.
SOME-HOW.
THANKS, NED... AND I DO MEAN THANKS.
DYNAMITE?

OUR PROBLEM WAS TO RECREATE THE SEQUENCE OF EVENTS WHICH LED TO YOUR FIRST TRANSFORMATION, ALEC, AND IN THE PAST THREE DAYS, I THINK WE'VE ACCOMPLISHED THIS.
WE'RE READY NOW TO BEGIN... IF YOU ARE.
EVERYTHING IS AS IT WAS THAT DAY-- THE CHEMICALS, THEIR ARRANGEMENT ON THE LAB TABLE, THE BOMB, AND OUTSIDE WE'VE EVEN BUILT A "SWAMP."
A COLLEAGUE IN LOUISIANA SENT ME AN ANALYSIS OF THE SWAMP WATERS THERE-- AND I THINK WE'VE--
EDWARD...
I'M SORRY, ALEC. OF COURSE-- YOU'RE IMPATIENT. VERY WELL, THEN... THE BOMB IS SET TO GO OFF IN ONE MINUTE.
YOU'LL KNOW WHAT TO DO THEN.
ONE MINUTE: THE SECONDS LITERALLY CRAWL...
AND AS EACH INSTANT GOES PAST, IT BRINGS ANOTHER MEMORY...
...UNTIL, SIXTY MEMORIES LATER, ALL TIME ENDS...
TICK TICK TICK TICK
...IN ONE BLINDING, WHITE-HOT EXPLOSION.
BWARDOOOOMM

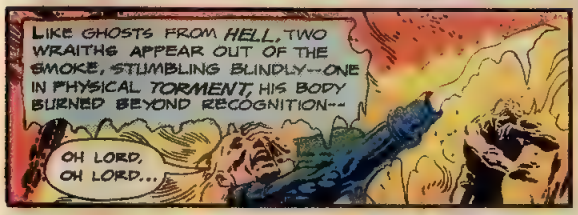
AGONY: RED, RAGING PAIN FLOWS OVER THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED SWAMP THING, STUNNING HIM WITH ITS TORMENT.
ONCE BEFORE, HE STAGGERED FROM A BURNING ROOM, FEELING SUCH PAIN--
OH MY GOD! OH MY DEAR GOD!
ONCE BEFORE, HE STUMBLED BLINDLY, SEARCHING FOR COOL WATERS--FINDING ONLY THE MUD OF A SWAMP.
FOR ALEC HOLLAND, IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THE WORLD HAS SPUN ROUND IN A CIRCLE--
--LIKE THE LEGENDARY WORM OUROBOUROS--
--A CREATURE WHICH ENDLESSLY DEVOURED ITS OWN TAIL, CONSUMING ITSELF OVER AND OVER, BEGINNING TO END.
IN PAIN, HE SPLASHES IN THE SLIME--AS HE SPLASHED ONCE BEFORE.
AND, AS HE DID THAT TIME LONG AGO, HE FEELS A CHANGE OCCURRING WITHIN HIM--
--BUT THEN:
NO!
YOU'VE GONE FAR ENOUGH! IT'S OVER, YOU UNDERSTAND? OVER!
WHAT ...IN THE NAME... OF HEAVEN...?
SWAAACK
IT'S A TRICK, A FILTHY TRICK TO ESCAPE ME NOW, AS YOU ESCAPE ME BEFORE! BUT THIS TIME I'VE GOT YOU, MONSTER--
THIS TIME YOU'LL DIE!
THROUGH A SWIRL OF PAIN, THE SWAMP THING HEARS SABRE'S VOICE--AND HEARING IT, REMEMBERS:

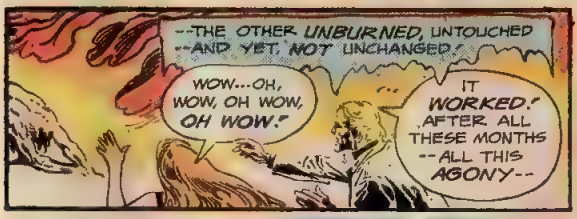

AND REMEMBERING, KNOWS--HE'S MET THIS MAN BEFORE!
LOOK AT ME, MONSTER! LOOK AT THE FACE OF A MAN YOU'VE DESTROYED!
I'M JOHN ZERO--A CIPHER, A BUREAUCRAT --A NOBODY-- UNTIL YOU CAME ALONG!
AND YOU-- YOU RUINED EVERYTHING!
GET AWAY, BEFORE I-- :UHHHH!:
CAPTURING YOU WAS MY GREATEST ACCOMPLISHMENT, MONSTER--THE FINEST MOMENT OF MY CAREER!
THEN YOU WERE "LOST" IN AN EXPLOSION --PRESUMED DEAD*-- AND ALL MY DREAMS, MY HOPES--
*SHOWN IN SWAMP THING #13.--EDITOR.
--EVERY-THING I EVER WORKED FOR --DIED WITH YOU!
AT FIRST, NOTHING CHANGED. BUT SLOWLY, I BEGAN TO RECEIVE FEWER ASSIGNMENTS-- LESS RESPON-SIBILITY--MORE PAPERWORK.
MY BOSSES WERE BASING ME OUT--
--REPLACING ME WITH A YOUNGER MAN. AND WHY?
BECAUSE OF YOU!
HE'S INSANE...! AND I'M SO WEAK FROM THIS CHEMICAL BATH I JUST HAD...HE CAN SLICE ME APART...!
THAK!
HAVE TO GRAB HIM...WHILE I CAN STILL... STAND UP...!
CHUNK
CLUMSY, MONSTER --VERY CLUMSY!
YOU'RE PROBABLY WONDERING ABOUT MY LITTLE SWORD-HAND, AREN'T YOU? IT'S SOMETHING ELSE I OWE YOU FOR!

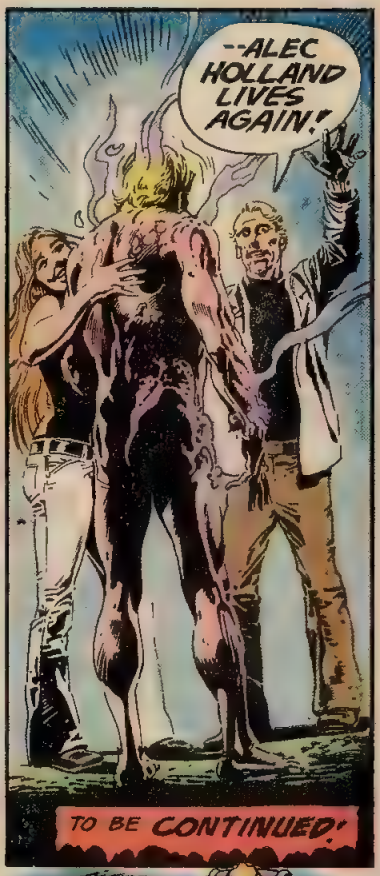

YOU'VE GOT TO STOP THIS! I WON'T LET YOU HURT HIM ANY-MORE!
WHA--?
DEAR GOD...MY ARM...!
WITCH!
NO ONE TOUCHES SABRE... NO ONE!
CRACK
RUTH...?
THE SHARP CRACK OF BONE HITTING BONE REACHES THROUGH THE SWAMP THING'S AGONY, TOUCHING DEEP WITHIN HIS SOUL--
--TO THE MEMORY OF ANOTHER WOMAN STRUCK DOWN BY IDLE CRUELTY-- LINDA HOLLAND, ONCE THIS "MONSTER" 'S WIFE.
MEMORY COMBINES WITH REALITY, AND THE PRODUCT IS--
RAGE.
NO!
WOOM
CONCLUDED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING


WITHOUT PURPOSE OR PLAN, THE SWAMP THING COLLIDES WITH THE MAN CALLED SABRE, STRIKING WITH A FORCE ALMOST AS INEXORABLE AS DESTINY.
WHOOOSH
THE TWO FIGURES STUMBLE AND FALL, AND IN THE INSTANT, ARE LOST FROM VIEW WITHIN A SUDDEN GOUT OF FLAME.

THERE FOLLOWS A CRY, LIKE THE WAIL OF A SOUL DAMNED TO HELL--
AAAAAAAAHH!
PROFESSOR ...PROFESSOR HOLLAND...?
--AND THEN: NOTHING --ONLY SILENCE.


LIKE GHOSTS FROM HELL, TWO WRAITHS APPEAR OUT OF THE SMOKE, STUMBLING BLINDLY--ONE IN PHYSICAL TORMENT, HIS BODY BURNED BEYOND RECOGNITION--
OH LORD, OH LORD...


--THE OTHER UNBURNED, UNTOUCHED --AND YET, NOT UNCHANGED.
WOW...OH, WOW, OH WOW, OH WOW!
IT WORKED! AFTER ALL THESE MONTHS --ALL THIS AGONY--



NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FIRST WEEK IN MAY

SWAMP THING
THE LINE OF SUPER-STARS
DC
MORE ACTION THAN EVER!
THE BLAZING BATTLE WITH THRUDVANG!
30c
NO. 24
SEPT.
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APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
STARTLING! THE ALL-NEW
SWAMP THING
TELL ME YOUR SECRET, SWAMP THING-- TELL ME-- OR DIE!
YOU WILL NEVER FORGIVE YOURSELF IF YOU MISS...
THE MYSTERY OF ALEC HOLLAND!

A NEW CHAPTER IN THE STARTLING SAGA OF THE SWAMP THING
PAIN-FIRE! ALIVE AND AVARICIOUS, ATTACKING SWAMP THING WITH SEARING, BLISTERING INTENSITY!
PAIN-FIRE: CONSUMING HIM SIMULTANEOUSLY FROM WITHIN--
--FEEDING ON HIS TORTURED SOUL!
THE EARTH BELOW

A DAVID ANTHONY KRAFT ✱ ERNIE CHUA - FRED CARRILLO ✱ CARL GAFFORD ✱ JOE ORLANDO
(WRITER) (ARTISTS) (COLORIST) (EDITOR)

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO GERRY CONWAY FOR THE PLOT!

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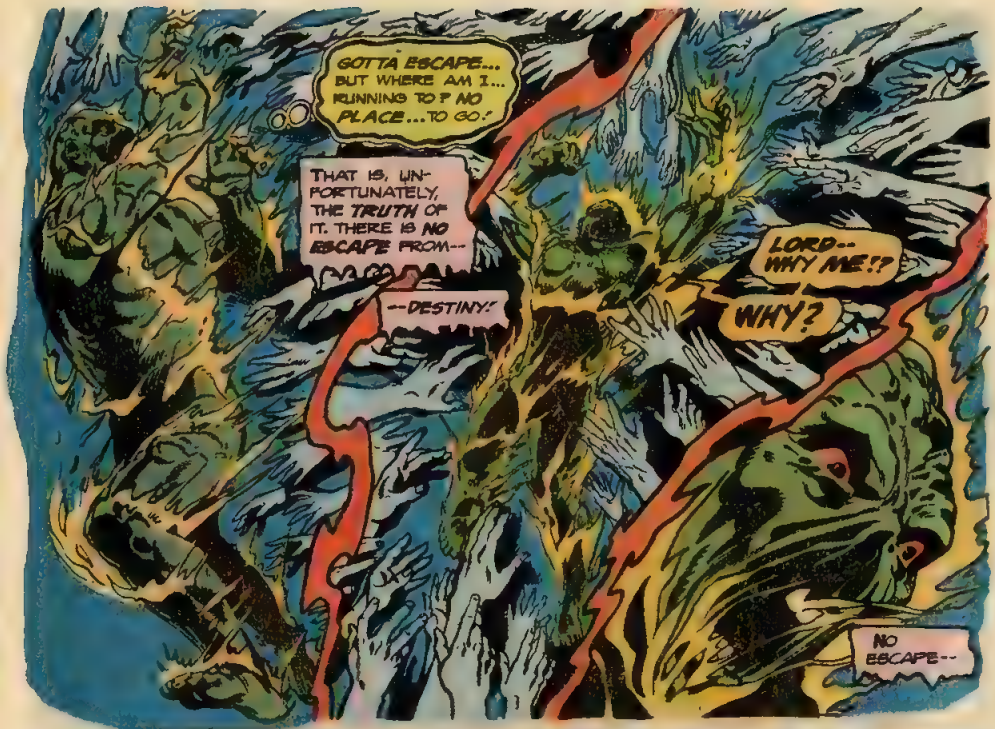
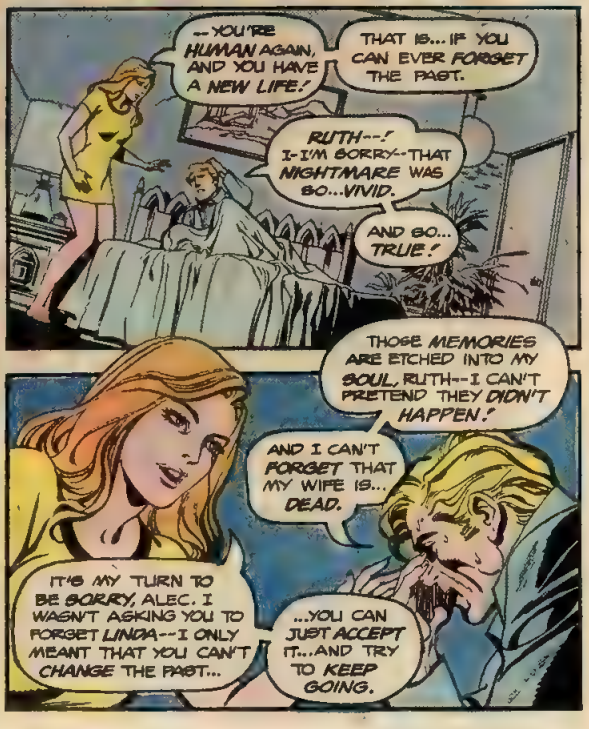
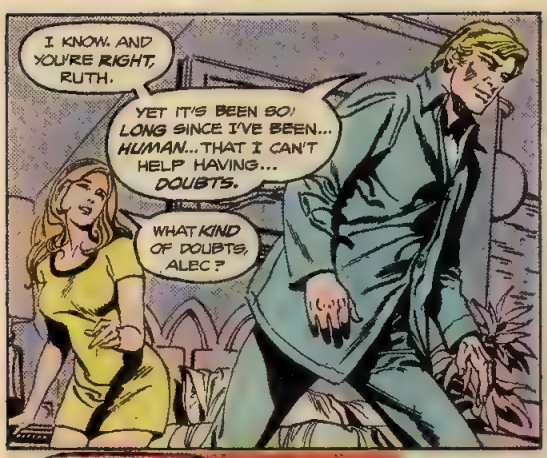
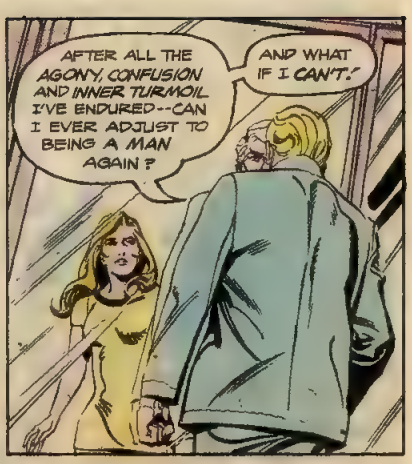
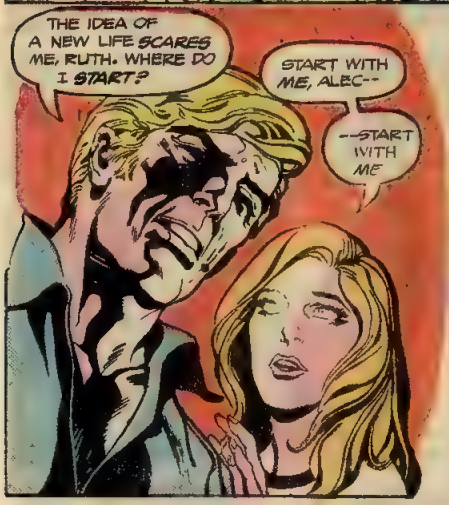

GOTTA ESCAPE... BUT WHERE AM I... RUNNING TO? NO PLACE... TO GO!
THAT IS, UNFORTUNATELY, THE TRUTH OF IT. THERE IS NO ESCAPE FROM--
--DESTINY!
LORD-- WHY ME!?
WHY?
NO ESCAPE--

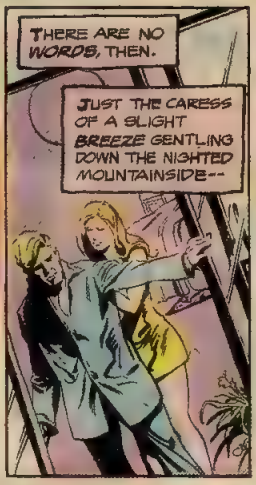
--NOT EVEN IN SLEEP!
ALEC-- WAKE UP! YOU'RE ALL RIGHT!
YOU'RE NOT THAT SHAMBLING SWAMP THING ANYMORE--

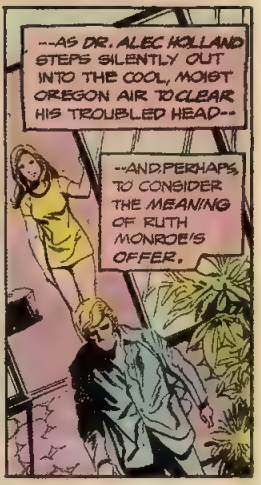

--YOU'RE HUMAN AGAIN, AND YOU HAVE A NEW LIFE!
THAT IS... IF YOU CAN EVER FORGET THE PAST.
RUTH--! I-I'M SORRY--THAT NIGHTMARE WAS SO...VIVID.
AND SO... TRUE!
THOSE MEMORIES ARE ETCHED INTO MY SOUL, RUTH--I CAN'T PRETEND THEY DIDN'T HAPPEN!
AND I CAN'T FORGET THAT MY WIFE IS... DEAD.
IT'S MY TURN TO BE SORRY, ALEC. I WASN'T ASKING YOU TO FORGET LINDA--I ONLY MEANT THAT YOU CAN'T CHANGE THE PAST...
...YOU CAN JUST ACCEPT IT...AND TRY TO KEEP GOING.

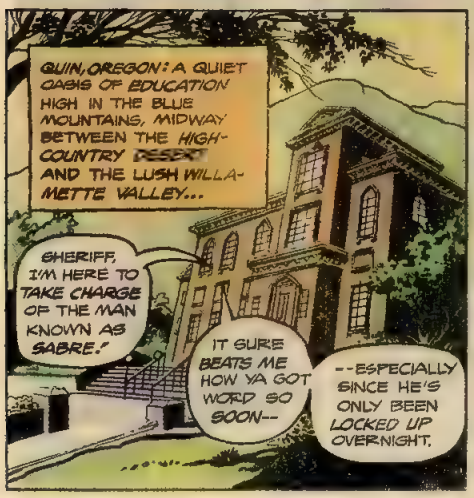

I KNOW. AND YOU'RE RIGHT, RUTH.
YET IT'S BEEN SO LONG SINCE I'VE BEEN... HUMAN... THAT I CAN'T HELP HAVING... DOUBTS.
WHAT KIND OF DOUBTS, ALEC?

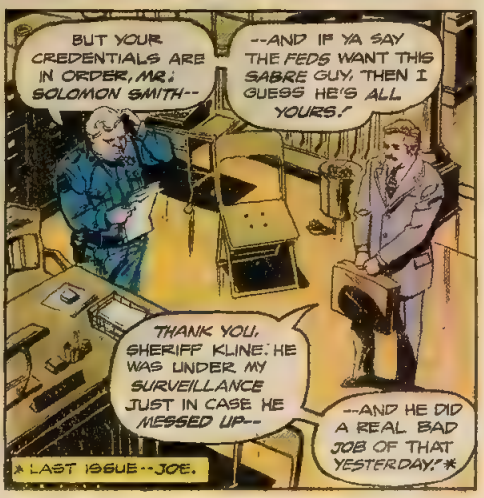

AFTER ALL THE AGONY, CONFUSION AND INNER TURMOIL I'VE ENDURED--CAN I EVER ADJUST TO BEING A MAN AGAIN?
AND WHAT IF I CAN'T.'


THE IDEA OF A NEW LIFE SCARES ME, RUTH. WHERE DO I START?
START WITH ME, ALEC--
--START WITH ME


THERE ARE NO WORDS, THEN.
JUST THE CARESS OF A SLIGHT BREEZE GENTLING DOWN THE NIGHTED MOUNTAINSIDE--


--AS DR. ALEC HOLLAND STEPS SILENTLY OUT INTO THE COOL, MOIST OREGON AIR TO CLEAR HIS TROUBLED HEAD--
--AND PERHAPS, TO CONSIDER THE MEANING OF RUTH MONROE'S OFFER.


QUIN, OREGON: A QUIET OASIS OF EDUCATION HIGH IN THE BLUE MOUNTAINS, MIDWAY BETWEEN THE HIGH-COUNTRY RESORT AND THE LUSH WILLAMETTE VALLEY...
SHERIFF, I'M HERE TO TAKE CHARGE OF THE MAN KNOWN AS SABRE!
IT SURE BEATS ME HOW YA GOT WORD SO SOON--
--ESPECIALLY SINCE HE'S ONLY BEEN LOCKED UP OVERNIGHT.


BUT YOUR CREDENTIALS ARE IN ORDER, MR. SOLOMON SMITH--
--AND IF YA SAY THE FEDS WANT THIS SABRE GUY, THEN I GUESS HE'S ALL YOURS!
THANK YOU, SHERIFF KLINE. HE WAS UNDER MY SURVEILLANCE JUST IN CASE HE MESSED UP--
--AND HE DID A REAL BAD JOB OF THAT YESTERDAY!*
* LAST ISSUE--JOE.

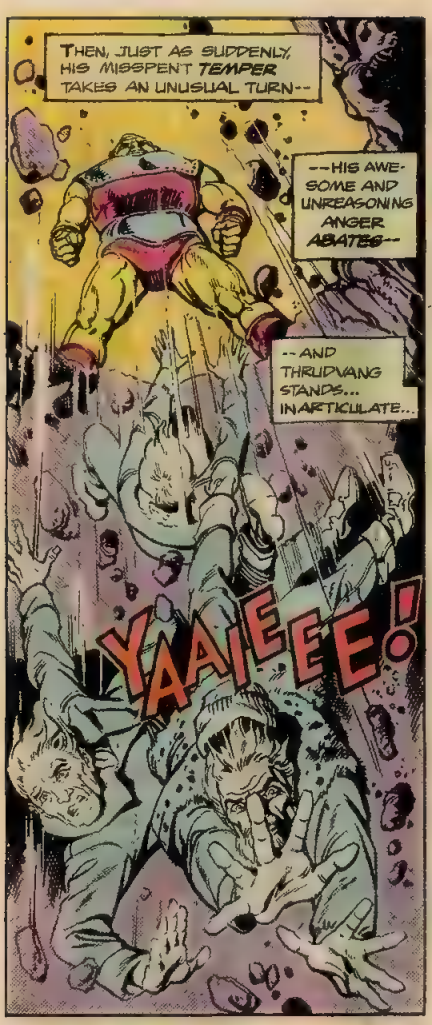
FOLLOW ME, MR. SMITH--
--AN' IF YA DON'T MIND MY ASKIN', WHAT'S THIS ALL ABOUT, ANYWAY?
SHERIFF, I AM NOT AT LIBERTY TO REVEAL ANY DETAILS--
--EXCEPT FOR MY IMMEDIATE ORDERS, WHICH ARE, AS YOU ALREADY KNOW--
--TO SECURE CUSTODY OF SABRE!
SHORTLY THEREAFTER: RARE FOOTAGE ASSEMBLED FROM THE PERSISTENT EFFORTS OF VARIOUS NEWS TEAMS--
--AND FROM OTHER OCCASIONAL AND LARGELY ACCIDENTAL FILMED SIGHTINGS OF THE MOSS-DRAPED MARSH DWELLER--
--FLUTTERS NOISELESSLY IN A DARKENED CHAMBER--
--WITNESSED ONLY BY FOUR OMINOUS PAIRS OF NARROWED EYES.
AN ARMY OF SWAMP SOLDIERS, AT OUR COMMAND...
...IN THE SERVICE OF COLOSSUS--!
LOOK CLOSELY, MEN--AND IMAGINE." ENVISION AN ARMY OF SUCH SOLDIERS, EACH ONE OF THEM COMPOSED OF SLIME AND MUCK, INHUMANLY STRONG AND NEARLY INDESTRUCTIBLE--
--YET WITH NO WANTS OR NEEDS BEYOND A PATHETIC, MINDLESS COMPULSION TO OBEY!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

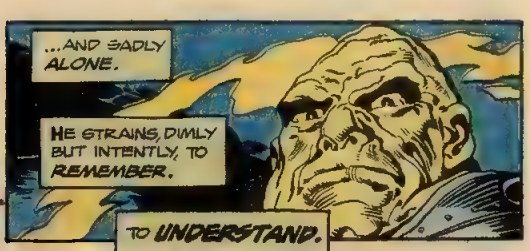
BUT BEFORE THAT ARMY CAN BECOME A REALITY, WE MUST FIRST LEARN THE SECRET OF THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA--
--AND WE CAN ONLY DO THAT BY CAPTURING THE SWAMP THING!
YOU FAILED THAT TASK, SABRE! FAILED-- AND HAD TO BE RESCUED FROM JAIL BY SOLOMON SMITH."
THUS, YOU ARE NO LONGER CHIEF ENFORCER--
--AND MORE, NEXT TIME YOU FAIL--
--YOU DIE!
SO: MY CAREER, MY HONOR, MY RIGHT HAND ARE NOT ENOUGH--NEXT MY LIFE IS TO BE FORFEIT TO THAT MONSTER!
I WILL NOT FAIL AGAIN."
COUNCILMAN RED-- WHAT OF SABRE'S COMPANION, WHO STILL REMAINS IN ORBSON?
AYE, WHAT OF THRUDVANG --THE EARTH MASTER?
FOR IF THIS ELUSIVE SWAMP THING CANNOT BE CAPTURED BY OUR AGENTS, THEN I AM OF THE MIND THAT IT MUST BE--
--DESTROYED!
DAK-KOOM
DO NOT ALLOW YOUR EMOTIONS TO RUN RAMPANT OVER YOUR BETTER JUDGMENT, COUNCILMAN BLUE!
THE SECRET WE SEEK IS NOT DEATH--THOUGH THAT IS ALWAYS A FINAL RECOURSE!
AS FOR THRUDVANG...

"...HE IS...
"...UNPREDICTABLE."
"HE'S BEEN MUTE AND SURLY SINCE THE TREATMENTS WHICH RECREATED HIM--
"--AND THIS SWAMP THING MISSION IS HIS FIRST FIELD ASSIGNMENT.
UNSUPERVISED, THRUDVANG MAY BE WANDERING AT LARGE --
KRA-
DA

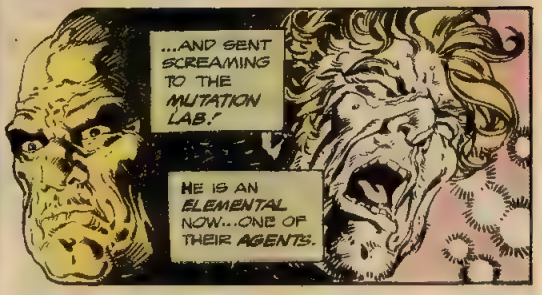
HEY, FELLAS--WE GOT COMPANY...
...BAD COMPANY!
"HIS DISPOSITION IS UNSTABLE--
"--HE'S EASILY ANTAGONIZED--
"--AND HIS POTENTIAL FOR DESTRUCTION IS TRULY IMMENSE--
"--ALMOST INFINITE!
BACK OFF, DAMN YOU...
--BACK OFF!
DON'T HASSLE HIM, BONDO -- JUST GET AWAY FROM THE TRUCK--
...NOW!
BLOM!
"--AND ANY INCIDENT AT ALL CAN PROVOKE HIS REMORSELESS HOSTILITY!
"YOU'VE GOT TO FIND HIM-- BEFORE HE GOES ON A BERSERK RAMPAGE!"

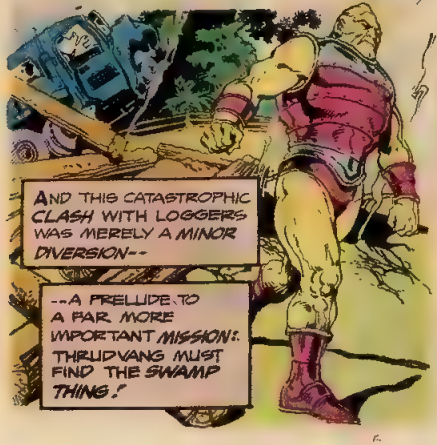
IT IS TOO LATE FOR THAT.
ALREADY, TURBULENT RAGE HAS REPLACED LIMITED REASON, ESCALATING THIS RANDOM ENCOUNTER INTO AN INCREDIBLE ORGY OF CARNAGE AND CHAOS!
BUH-RA-DOOOM!
AND BEHIND THOSE OBSIDIAN EYES, TEARING SAVAGELY AT THE DARK MIND OF THE GREAT TITAN--
--IS AN INCHOATE AND PRIMAL FURY SEEKING EVEN MORE DIRECT EXPRESSION!
FINALLY, HE CAN CONTAIN IT NO LONGER--
--AND ABRUPTLY IT LASHES OUT--
--TWISTING, RENDING AND EXPLODING IN VIOLENT UPHEAVAL!
THE POWER OF... THRUDVANG THE EARTH MASTER!
SKR-R-UNCH-H-!
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

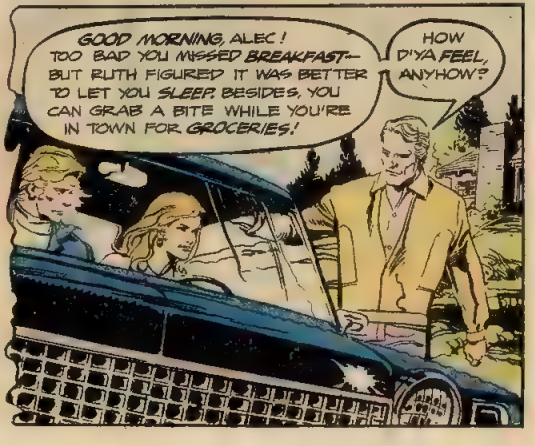

THEN, JUST AS SUDDENLY, HIS MISSPENT TEMPER TAKES AN UNUSUAL TURN--
--HIS AWESOME AND UNREASONING ANGER ABATES--
--AND THRUDVANG STANDS... INARTICULATE...
YAAIEEE!


...AND SADLY ALONE.
HE STRAINS, DIMLY BUT INTENTLY, TO REMEMBER.
TO UNDERSTAND.

IMAGES BURN DISTANTLY THROUGH THE MINDLESS, SENSELESS DAZE OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS--
--FRAGMENTARY AND FLEETING MEMORIES OF A FEARFUL BOWERY BUM DRAFTED BY THE COLOSSUS ORGANIZATION...


...AND SENT SCREAMING TO THE MUTATION LAB.!
HE IS AN ELEMENTAL NOW...ONE OF THEIR AGENTS.


AND THIS CATASTROPHIC CLASH WITH LOGGERS WAS MERELY A MINOR DIVERSION--
--A PRELUDE TO A FAR MORE IMPORTANT MISSION: THRUDVANG MUST FIND THE SWAMP THING!


GOOD MORNING, ALEC! TOO BAD YOU MISSED BREAKFAST-- BUT RUTH FIGURED IT WAS BETTER TO LET YOU SLEEP. BESIDES, YOU CAN GRAB A BITE WHILE YOU'RE IN TOWN FOR GROCERIES!
HOW D'YA FEEL, ANYHOW?

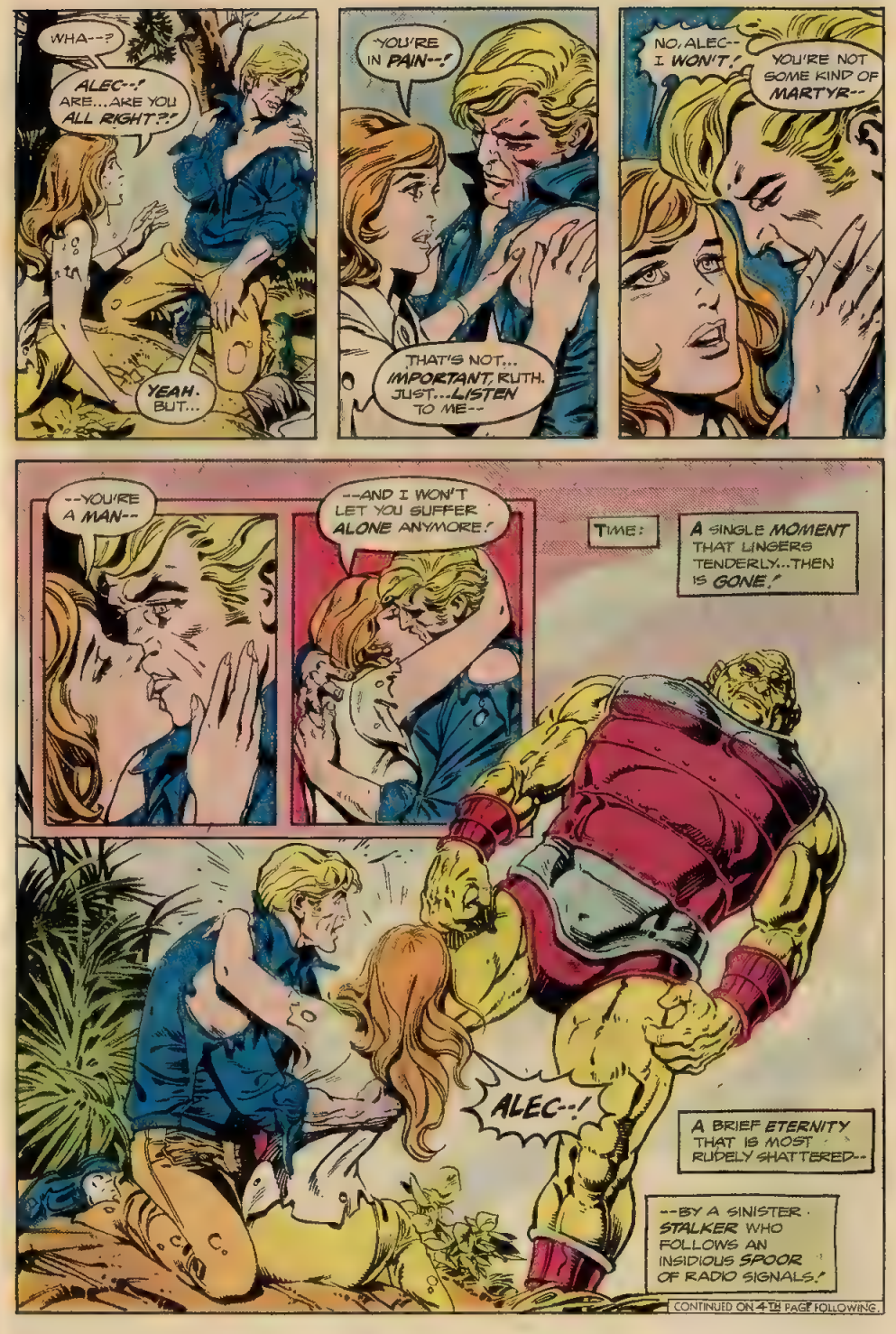
GREAT! THAT WAS REAL GENIUS, EDWARD--RECREATING THE EVENTS THAT MADE ME THE SWAMP THING...AND REVERSING THEM!*
YOU'VE GIVEN ME ANOTHER CHANCE AT BEING HUMAN, AND THAT MEANS A LOT TO ME. HELL--IT MEANS EVERYTHING!
THAT'S WHAT BROTHERS ARE FOR, ALEC--TO HELP ONE ANOTHER.
C'MON, HANDSOME--YOU CAN TALK TO EDWARD LATER.
* LAST ISSUE--JOE.
RIGHT NOW, I WANT YOU ALL TO MYSELF!
ALEC AND I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN RIVALS, WHILE HE WON ALL THE RESEARCH GRANTS, GOVERNMENT CHEMISTRY CONTRACTS AND RECOGNITION, I WENT COMPLETELY IGNORED.
NOW, HE'S BACK FROM THE "DEAD", AND ALREADY THE PATTERN STARTS ANEW--WITH RUTH! WELL, IT'S NOT GOING TO HAPPEN AGAIN, ALEC... NOT AGAIN!
Y'KNOW, RUTH--JUST BEING HERE LIKE THIS ERASES THE YEARS SINCE I'VE BEEN GONE, AND MAKES ALL THE INCREDIBLE EVENTS IN BETWEEN SEEM UNREAL.
YOU SOUND... WISTFUL.
I AM. EDWARD IS LUCKY--HE WAS CONTENT TO STAY IN OREGON, WHILE I FELT COMPELLED TO PURSUE A CAREER AND ABANDON MY PAST.
BUT YOU'VE COME BACK--AND THERE'S STILL TIME ENOUGH TO BUILD A NEW FUTURE. ALL IT TAKES IS... COURAGE.
ACCKKKK!
ALEC--WHAT'S WRONG?
I HAD A...BACKACHE ...JUST FOR A SECOND.
BUT IT'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT--IT'S ALREADY GONE.
ARE YOU SURE?
UUNGH!
ALEC--! THE TRANSFORMATION--IT MUST HAVE PUT A SERIOUS STRAIN ON YOUR SYSTEM!
I'LL GET YOU TO A DOCTOR!
I'M...ALL RIGHT, RUTH. I...GUESS I'VE STILL GOT SOME ADJUSTING TO DO...THAT'S ALL.
ADJUSTING!? YOU COULD BE DYING--DO YOU REALIZE THAT?
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING.

I TOLD YOU--I'M ALL RIGHT!
AND I'M SUPPOSED TO BELIEVE YOU?
I JUST NEED A FEW DAYS TO REST AND RECUPERATE, THAT'S ALL.
LET'S GO HOME, RUTH.
OKAY, ALEC--IF THAT'S WHAT YOU WANT. BUT I DON'T BUY IT--YOU'RE HIDING SOMETHING.
SHE'S RIGHT--I DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT IT, EVEN TO MYSELF...I WANTED TO PRETEND THAT I WAS NORMAL AGAIN.
BUT THE LAST TIME I FELT LIKE THIS WAS AS SWAMP THING, WHEN THE BIO-REGENERATIVE FORMULA CAUSED ME TO REGROW MY LOST ARM.*
LORD, WHAT CAN IT BE DOING TO ME NOW?
*SWAMP THING #5--JOE.
SINCE WE ARE TO BE PARTNERS, SOLOMON SMITH, I WILL TELL YOU WHAT I DID NOT TELL THEM.
YOU MEAN YOU DARED, TO WITHHOLD INFORMATION FROM THE COUNCIL-MEN--?
INDEED.
THE SWAMP THING HAS REVERTED TO HIS HUMAN ALTER EGO--THUS RENDERING HIMSELF QUITE ...VULNERABLE. WE'LL FORCE HIM TO TALK BEFORE WE DESTROY HIM--SO WE ALONE WILL POSSESS HIS SECRET!
THEN, WE SHALL TRADE THE FORMULA--FOR POSITIONS OF POWER ON THE COUNCIL!
YOU ARE BOLD, SABRE--VERY BOLD.
BUT WHAT ABOUT THRUDVANG?
HE IS THE HAZARD, SMITH. I FEAR HE'LL ATTEMPT TO LOCATE THE SWAMP THING IN MY ABSENCE, AND IF HE GETS TO HIM BEFORE WE ARRIVE--
--WELL, THERE'S NO TELLING WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO DR. HOLLAND!
TARGET LOCATED.
THE TINY TRACER IMPLANTED IN ALEC SWAMP THING'S SHOULDER STILL TRANSMITS ITS STEADY SIGNAL--
--AND FOR THRUDVANG THAT IS ENOUGH!

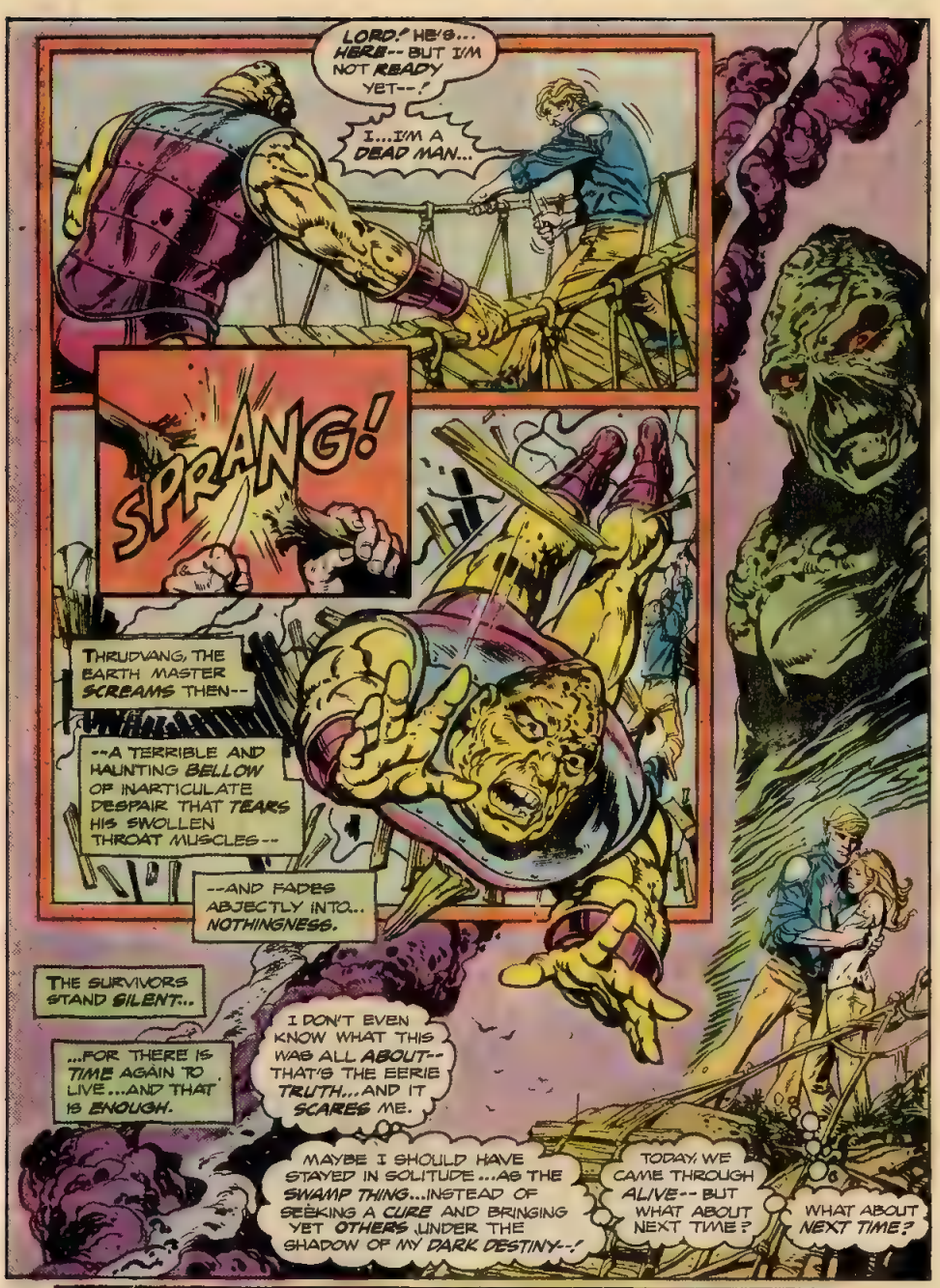
FOR HE IS THE EARTH MASTER, AND HIS ARCANE ASSAULT IS ACCURATE--
--UNFORESEEN--
SKRRREEE!
--AND ABSOLUTELY UNAVOIDABLE!
RUTH AND ALEC DO NOT EVEN HAVE TIME TO CONFRONT THE REALITY OF DEATH--
--BEFORE THEY ARE SPARED ITS BLOODY EMBRACE--
KAR-AASH!!
--AND GIVEN ANOTHER UNCERTAIN OPTION ON SURVIVAL!
A MOST PRECARIOUS, AND PERHAPS, SHORTLIVED OPTION...
THOOM!
GOOD LORD! I'VE--GOT TO--
--MOVE!
I'M STILL '...DAZED... EVERYTHING HAPPENING SO FAST!'
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

I DUNNO WHO THIS BRUISER IS--
--OR WHY HE'S AFTER ME--
"--BUT I DO KNOW JUST HOW I'D REACT...IF I WERE STILL THE SWAMP THING.'
"UNFORTUNATELY, I'M NOT!"
AND THAT MEANS THIS UNEQUAL BATTLE--
--MAY BE MY DEATH!
NO!
I'VE GOTTA GET TO RUTH BEFORE THAT AWKWARD MAN-MOUNTAIN GETS TO ME--
--OR SHE'LL BECOME A VICTIM, TOO!
THWOOSH
THANK GOD SHE'S ONLY UNCONSCIOUS! BRUISED...BUT ALIVE!
NOW ALL THAT'S LEFT IS--ESCAPE!

MY HULKING FOE IS BIG--BUT HE'S NOT FAST!
HE RELIES INSTEAD ON AN UNCANNY ABILITY TO DISRUPT THE EARTH--
FRA-KOOM!
--WHICH I'M HOPING I CAN OUT-DISTANCE QUICKLY, SINCE I CAN'T CARRY RUTH VERY FAR!
I'M STILL IN SHOCK FROM THE CRASH--I MAY COLLAPSE ANY SECOND--
--BUT IF I CAN PUT ENOUGH DISTANCE BETWEEN HIM AND US BEFORE THAT HAPPENS--
--AND THEN STAY OUT OF SIGHT--
--MAYBE HE WON'T BE ABLE TO FIND US!
A REASONABLE AND ASTUTE SCHEME, BASED ON THE OBVIOUSLY LIMITED INTELLECT OF THEIR ADVERSARY--
--AND ONE THAT MIGHT WELL HAVE SUCCEEDED IN ITS DESPERATE SIMPLICITY--
--IF NOT FOR THE TELLTALE BROADCAST OF THE MINIATURE HOMING DEVICE LODGED TRAITOROUSLY UNDER DR ALEC HOLLAND'S SKIN!
TIME!
HOW WELL I REMEMBER ITS SLUGGISH PASSAGE IN THE SWAMP... MAKING MY LONELY EXISTENCE A WRETCHED AND ENDLESS TORMENT OF INTROSPECTION!
NOW IT MOCKS ME, FORCING ME TO ACT IN HASTE AND EXHAUSTION! AND UNLESS I CAN GET RUTH UP ON HER OWN FEET--
--THIS IS THE END OF THE LINE... RIGHT HERE IN THE OPEN!
RUTH--WAKE UP!


WHA--?
ALEC--! ARE...ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?!
YEAH. BUT...
YOU'RE IN PAIN--!
THAT'S NOT... IMPORTANT, RUTH. JUST...LISTEN TO ME--
NO, ALEC-- I WON'T!
YOU'RE NOT SOME KIND OF MARTYR--
--YOU'RE A MAN--
--AND I WON'T LET YOU SUFFER ALONE ANYMORE!
TIME:
A SINGLE MOMENT THAT LINGERS TENDERLY...THEN IS GONE!
ALEC--!
A BRIEF ETERNITY THAT IS MOST RUDELY SHATTERED--
--BY A SINISTER STALKER WHO FOLLOWS AN INSIDIOUS SPOOR OF RADIO SIGNALS!
CONTINUED ON 4TH PAGE FOLLOWING.

RUTH--
--YOU'VE--
--GOTTA--
--RUN.!
NOT WITHOUT YOU, ALEC--NOT WITHOUT YOU!
RUN, DAMMIT!
SHE'S FROZEN!
THE CRASH... NOW THIS...ALL TOO MUCH FOR HER!
FEEL LIKE I'M GONNA PASS OUT--BUT I CAN'T... NOT YET! HAVE TO KEEP GOING...LEAD HIM AWAY FROM HER!
I DON'T BELIEVE IT!
I JUST GOT A FLASH OF MAD GENIUS!
ALTHOUGH THIS BRIDGE HAS BEEN HERE SINCE I WAS A KID, IT'S NOT NECESSARILY... PERMANENT!
AFTER ALL, THAT MINDLESS MAN-BRUTE WEIGHS HALF A TON IF HE WEIGHS AN OUNCE--
--AND WHEN I'M FINISHED, THAT JUST MAY BE ENOUGH TO SEND THIS STRUCTURE--AND HIM--PLUNGING TO THE BOTTOM OF THE McKENZIE RIVER GORGE!
IF NOT--I'M A GONER!


LORD! HE'S... HERE-- BUT I'M NOT READY YET--!
I...I'M A DEAD MAN...
SPRANG!
THRUDVANG, THE EARTH MASTER SCREAMS THEN--
--A TERRIBLE AND HAUNTING BELLOW OF INARTICULATE DESPAIR THAT TEARS HIS SWOLLEN THROAT MUSCLES--
--AND FADES ABJECTLY INTO... NOTHINGNESS.
THE SURVIVORS STAND SILENT..
...FOR THERE IS TIME AGAIN TO LIVE...AND THAT IS ENOUGH.
I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THIS WAS ALL ABOUT-- THAT'S THE EERIE TRUTH...AND IT SCARES ME.
MAYBE I SHOULD HAVE STAYED IN SOLITUDE...AS THE SWAMP THING...INSTEAD OF SEEKING A CURE AND BRINGING YET OTHERS UNDER THE SHADOW OF MY DARK DESTINY--!
TODAY, WE CAME THROUGH ALIVE-- BUT WHAT ABOUT NEXT TIME?
WHAT ABOUT NEXT TIME?

NEXT ISSUE:

HAWKMAN VS SWAMP THING

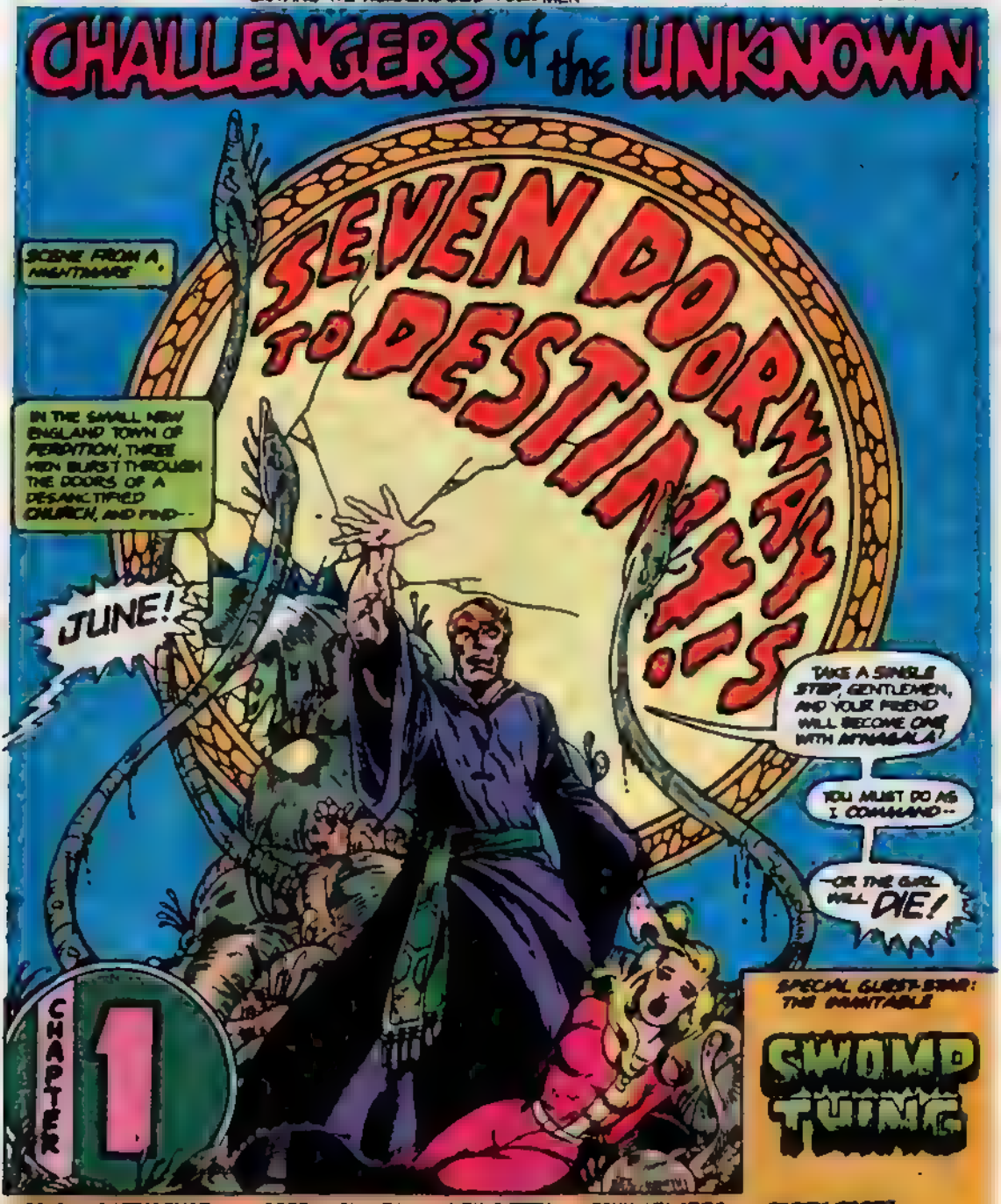
AND PORTLAND, OREGON, WILL NEVER BE THE SAME!

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE THIRD WEEK IN JULY

NO. 83 NOV.
35¢
30453
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
LET'S GET OUT OF HERE-- BEFORE THOSE MONSTERS DESTROY US ALL!
BUCKLER & RUBINSTEIN

FOUR MEN LIVING ON BORROWED TIME, DARING THE STRANGE AND INEXPLICABLE, EXPLORING THE BIZARRE, BRAVING THE HORRENDOUS! FOUR MEN--

CHALLENGERS of the UNKNOWN


SCENE FROM A NIGHTMARE...
IN THE SMALL NEW ENGLAND TOWN OF PERDITION, THREE MEN BURST THROUGH THE DOORS OF A DESANCTIFIED CHURCH, AND FIND--
JUNE!
SEVEN DOORWAYS TO DESTINIES!
TAKE A SINGLE STEP, GENTLEMEN, AND YOUR FRIEND WILL BECOME ONE WITH AHMAGALA!
YOU MUST DO AS I COMMAND--
--OR THE GIRL WILL DIE!
CHAPTER 1
SPECIAL GUEST-STAR: THE UNMITABLE
SWAMP THING

VERSES OF VENGEANCE AND VICTORY FROM THE PENS AND PENCILS OF --

GERRY CONWAY = WRITER | KEITH GIFFEN = PENCILLER | JOHN CELARDO = INKER | JERRY ORDWAY = CRAYOLA-WIELDER

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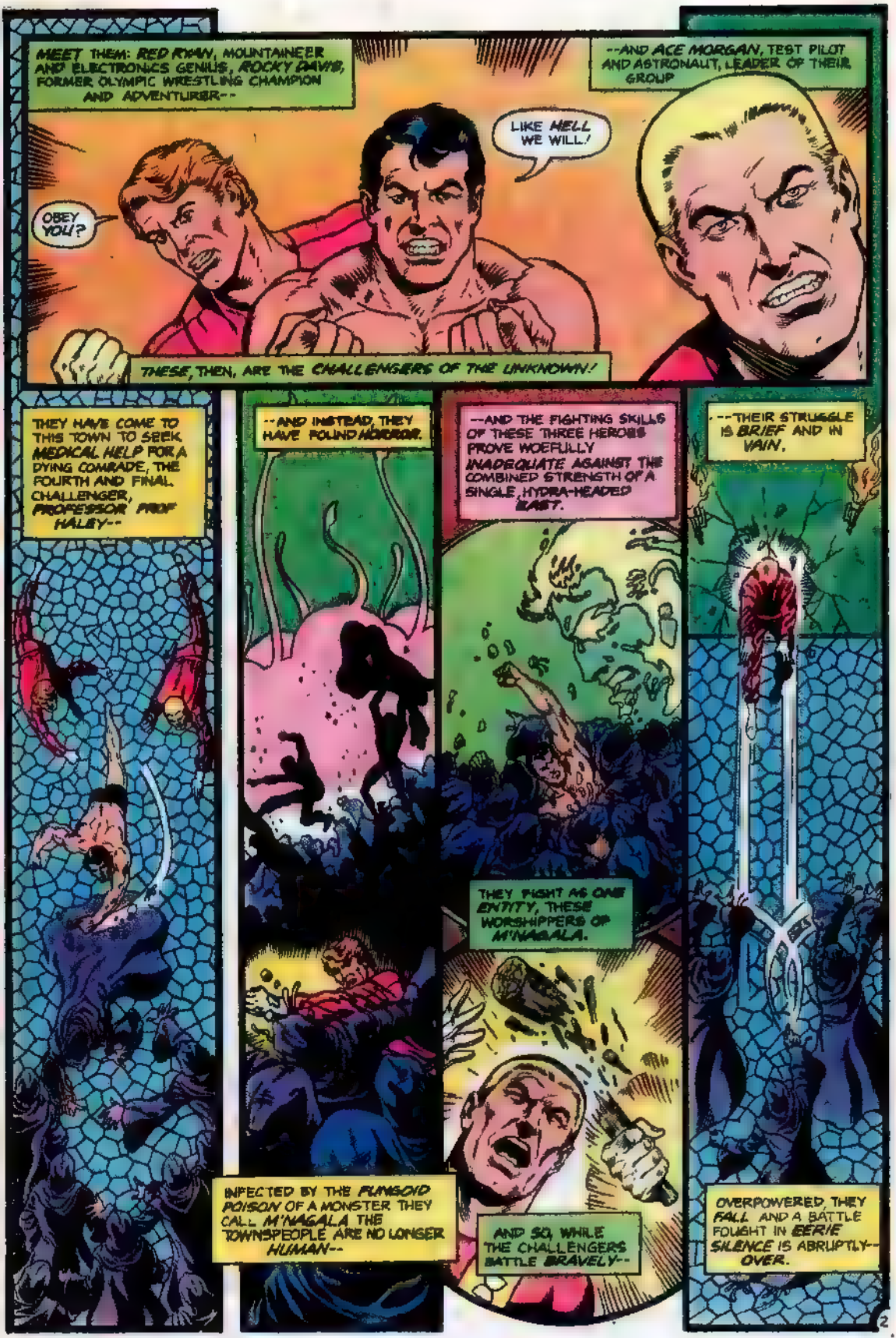
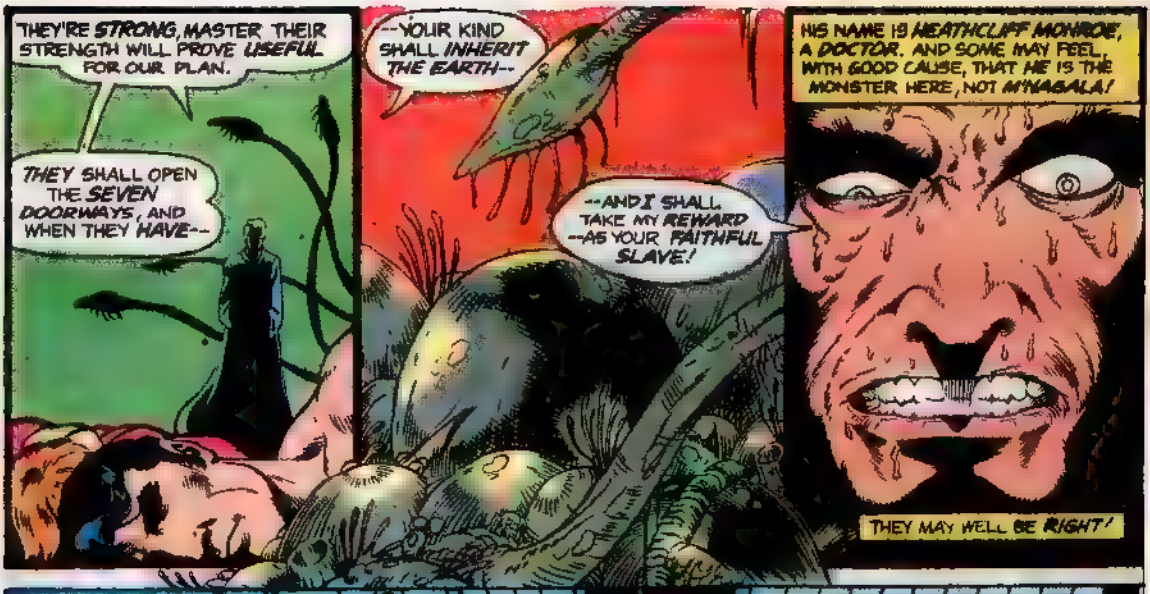
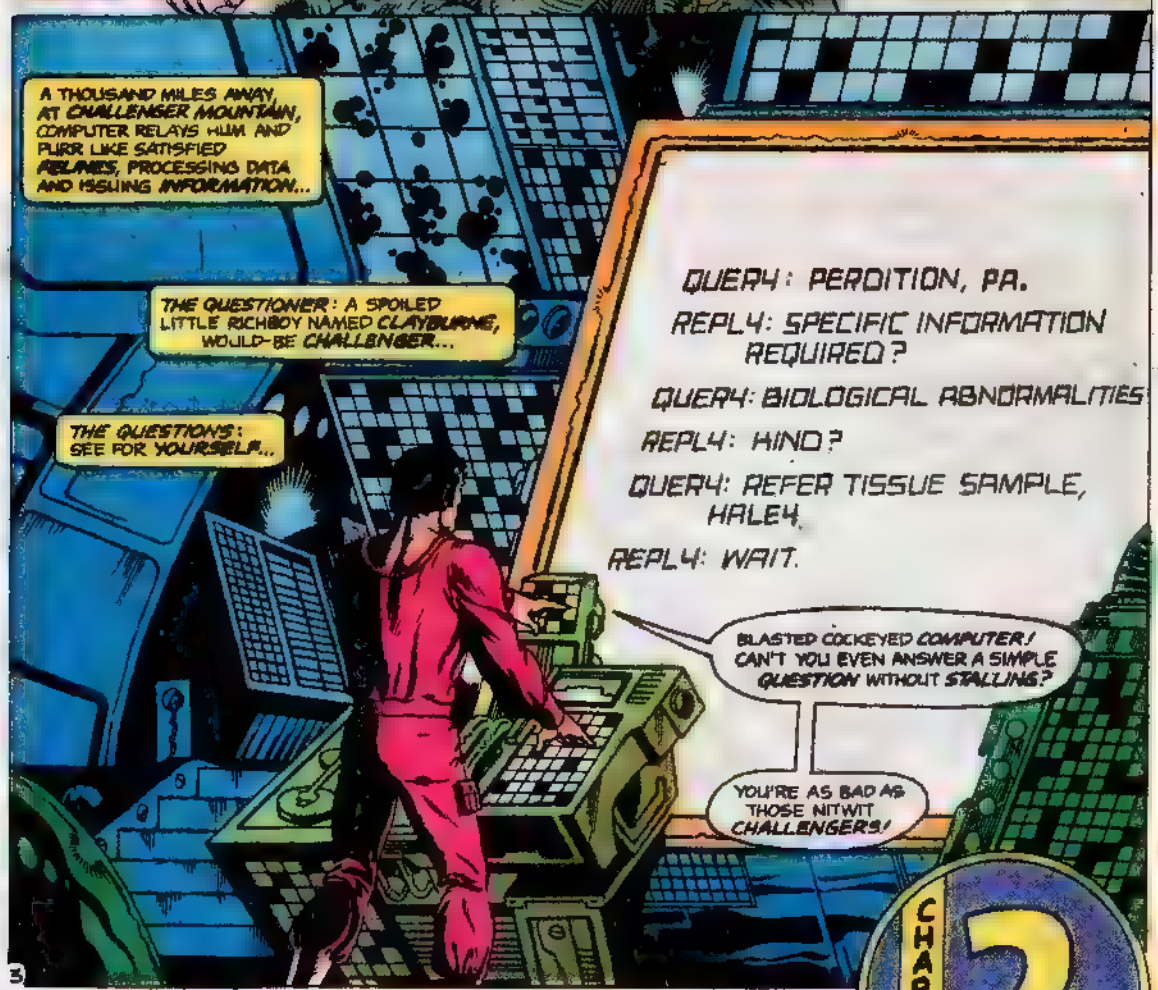

MEET THEM: RED RYAN, MOUNTAINEER AND ELECTRONICS GENIUS, ROCKY DAVIS, FORMER OLYMPIC WRESTLING CHAMPION AND ADVENTURER--
--AND ACE MORGAN, TEST PILOT AND ASTRONAUT, LEADER OF THEIR GROUP
OBEY YOU?
LIKE HELL WE WILL!
THESE, THEN, ARE THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN!
THEY HAVE COME TO THIS TOWN TO SEEK MEDICAL HELP FOR A DYING COMRADE, THE FOURTH AND FINAL CHALLENGER, PROFESSOR PROF HALEY--
--AND INSTEAD, THEY HAVE FOUND HORROR.
--AND THE FIGHTING SKILLS OF THESE THREE HEROES PROVE WOEFULLY INADEQUATE AGAINST THE COMBINED STRENGTH OF A SINGLE, HYDRA-HEADED BEAST.
--THEIR STRUGGLE IS BRIEF AND IN VAIN.
THEY FIGHT AS ONE ENTITY, THESE WORSHIPPERS OF M'NAGALA.
INFECTED BY THE FLAMSOID POISON OF A MONSTER THEY CALL M'NAGALA THE TOWNSPEOPLE ARE NO LONGER HUMAN--
AND SO, WHILE THE CHALLENGERS BATTLE BRAVELY--
OVERPOWERED, THEY FALL AND A BATTLE FOUGHT IN EERIE SILENCE IS ABRUPTLY-- OVER.

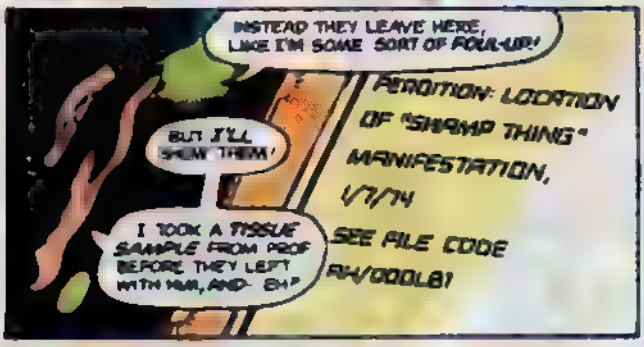

THEY'RE STRONG, MASTER THEIR STRENGTH WILL PROVE USEFUL FOR OUR PLAN.
THEY SHALL OPEN THE SEVEN DOORWAYS, AND WHEN THEY HAVE--
--YOUR KIND SHALL INHERIT THE EARTH--
--AND I SHALL TAKE MY REWARD --AS YOUR FAITHFUL SLAVE!
HIS NAME IS HEATHCLIFF MONROE, A DOCTOR. AND SOME MAY FEEL, WITH GOOD CAUSE, THAT HE IS THE MONSTER HERE, NOT M'NAGALA!
THEY MAY WELL BE RIGHT!

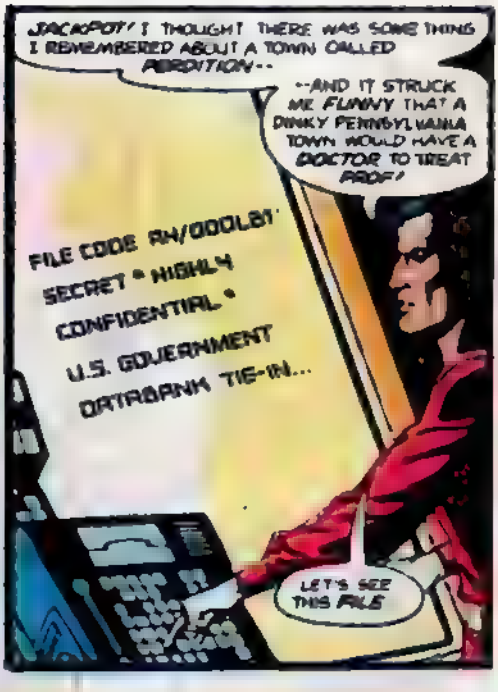

A THOUSAND MILES AWAY, AT CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN, COMPUTER RELAYS HUM AND PURR LIKE SATISFIED FELINES, PROCESSING DATA AND ISSUING INFORMATION...
THE QUESTIONER: A SPOILED LITTLE RICHBOY NAMED CLAYBURNE, WOULD-BE CHALLENGER...
THE QUESTIONS: SEE FOR YOURSELF...
QUERY: PERDITION, PA.
REPLY: SPECIFIC INFORMATION REQUIRED?
QUERY: BIOLOGICAL ABNORMALITIES
REPLY: KIND?
QUERY: REFER TISSUE SAMPLE, HALEY.
REPLY: WAIT.
BLASTED COCKEYED COMPUTER! CAN'T YOU EVEN ANSWER A SIMPLE QUESTION WITHOUT STALLING?
YOU'RE AS BAD AS THOSE NITWIT CHALLENGERS!

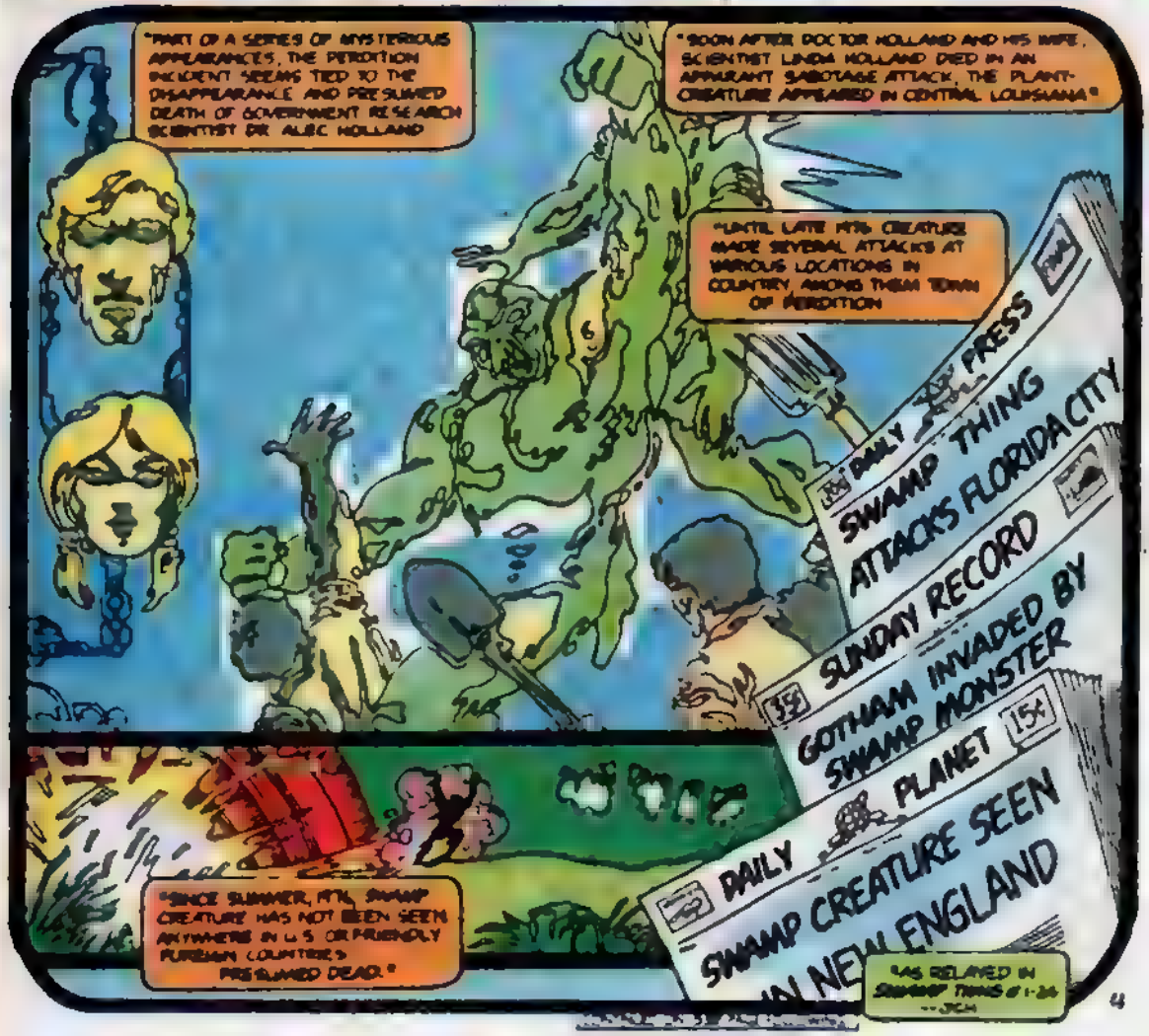
CHAPTER 2
SAVIOR FROM THE SWAMP?

AFTER ALL, I'M THE MAN WHO DISCOVERED PROF'S DISEASE AND FOUND OUT WHO WAS THE BEST DOCTOR TO TREAT IT!*
BUT DO THEY TAKE ME WITH THEM? DO THEY EVEN THANK ME?
NO!

*TRUE ENOUGH. SEE LAST ISSUE -- JCH


INSTEAD THEY LEAVE HERE, LIKE I'M SOME SORT OF FOUL-UP!
BUT I'LL SHOW THEM!
I TOOK A TISSUE SAMPLE FROM PROF BEFORE THEY LEFT WITH HIM, AND- EH?
PERDITION: LOCATION OF "SWAMP THING" MANIFESTATION, 1/7/74
SEE FILE CODE AH/000181

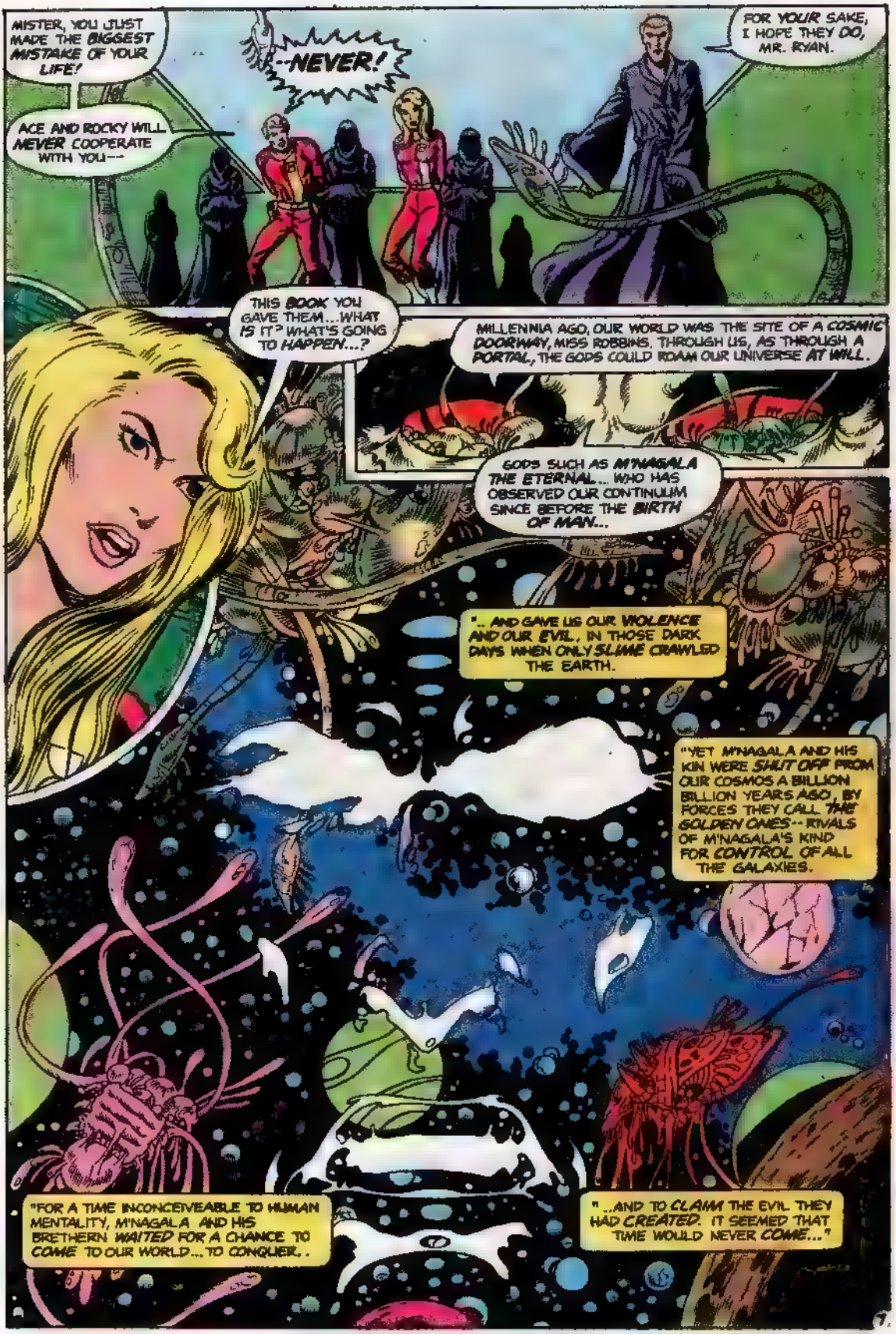

JACKPOT! I THOUGHT THERE WAS SOMETHING I REMEMBERED ABOUT A TOWN CALLED PERDITION--
--AND IT STRUCK ME FUNNY THAT A DINKY PENNSYLVANIA TOWN WOULD HAVE A DOCTOR TO TREAT PROF!
FILE CODE AH/000181 SECRET * HIGHLY CONFIDENTIAL * U.S. GOVERNMENT ORTRONIK TIE-IN...
LET'S SEE THIS FILE

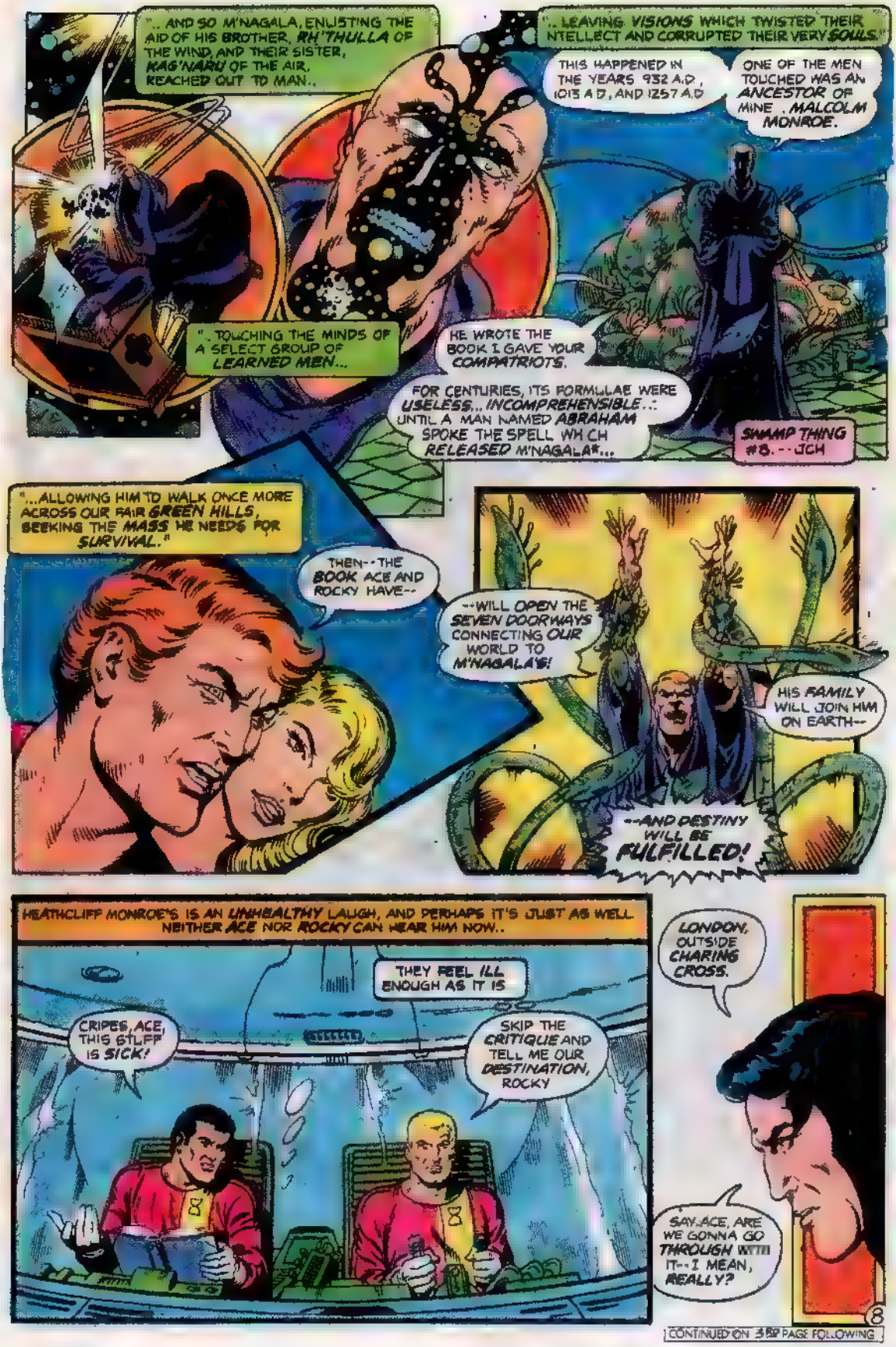

"PART OF A SERIES OF MYSTERIOUS APPEARANCES, THE PERDITION INCIDENT SEEMS TIED TO THE DISAPPEARANCE AND PRESUMED DEATH OF GOVERNMENT RESEARCH SCIENTIST DR ALEC HOLLAND
"SOON AFTER DOCTOR HOLLAND AND HIS WIFE, SCIENTIST LINDA HOLLAND DIED IN AN APPARENT SABOTAGE ATTACK, THE PLANT-CREATURE APPEARED IN CENTRAL LOUISIANA"
"UNTIL LATE 1974 CREATURE MADE SEVERAL ATTACKS AT VARIOUS LOCATIONS IN COUNTRY, AMONG THEM TOWN OF PERDITION
DAILY PRESS SWAMP THING ATTACKS FLORIDA CITY
SUNDAY RECORD GOTHAM INVADED BY SWAMP MONSTER
DAILY PLANET SWAMP CREATURE SEEN IN NEW ENGLAND
"SINCE SUMMER, 1974, SWAMP CREATURE HAS NOT BEEN SEEN ANYWHERE IN U.S. OR FRIENDLY FOREIGN COUNTRIES PRESUMED DEAD."
"AS RELATED IN SWAMP THING #1-24 --JCH

HUH? WHAT'S ALL THAT GOT TO DO WITH THE PROF'S TISSUE SAMPLE?
ALEX HOLLAND IS EXPERT ON BIOCHEMICAL ABNORMALITIES
YEAH, BUT YOU SAID HOLLAND WAS DEAD
DATA UPDATE: DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND REPORTED ALIVE AND WELL, LIVING IN QUINN, OREGON WITH BROTHER AND WORKING ONCE MORE FOR GOVERNMENT
SOURCE CONFIDENTIAL DEFENSE DEPART FILES
COMPUTER--I THINK YOU JUST HIT PAYDIRT!
THIS MAY BE WHAT WE'RE LOOKING FOR, RUTH
FORTY-FIVE MINUTES LATER, AT A SMALL UNIVERSITY NESTLED IN THE HEART OF QUIET QUINN, OREGON.
WHAT YOU'RE LOOKING FOR, ALEC.
I'M NOT SO SURE I WANT YOU TO DEVELOP A WORKING BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA.
NOT AFTER WHAT HAPPENED THE LAST TIME.*
RUTH THAT PART OF MY LIFE IS OVER! THE SWAMP THING IS DEAD.
THANKS TO YOU AND MY BROTHER EDWARD I'M HUMAN AGAIN, RUTH NOT A MONSTER.
I'M A MAN.. AND NOTHING IS MORE IMPORTANT TO ME THAN YOU...
OH, ALEC. SOMETIMES I FEEL SO FRIGHTENED
DON'T BE, RUTH
NEITHER OF US EVER HAS TO BE FRIGHTENED AGAIN...
DOCTOR HOLLAND?

* SWAMP THING #1, AGAIN -- JCH

MY NAME'S CLAYBURNE... AND I NEED YOUR HELP!
THE SUN HAS BEEN DOWN FOR AN HOUR IN PERDITION, PENNSYLVANIA, YET ONLY NOW DO THE CHURCH DOORS OPEN AND THE NIGHT-DWELLERS APPEAR, AS...
YOU UNDERSTAND OUR BARGAIN, GENTLEMEN?
YEAH WE DO WHAT YOU TELL US--
--AND YOU DON'T KILL RED JUNE, OR PROF! SOME BARGAIN!
YOU SHOULD BE GRATEFUL WE CHOSE TO BARGAIN AT ALL, AFTER YOUR TREACHEROUS ATTACK.
TAKE THIS BOOK AND FOLLOW THE INSTRUCTIONS IN CHAPTER THIRTEEN.
YOUR VESSEL HAS ALREADY BEEN STOCKED WITH THE NECESSARY EQUIPMENT
"BUT BETRAY US AGAIN..." THE REMAINDER OF THE SENTENCE GOES UNSPOKEN!
SILENTLY, THE TWO MEN BOARD THE CHALLENGERS' STREAMLINED JET AND LEAP SKYWARD.
WHILE BELOW, THE ROBED FIGURES WATCH TILL THE JET IS OUT OF VIEW... THEN SLOWLY RETURN TO THEIR BLACK CHURCH!
The GODS CRAWL CLOSER
CHAPTER 3


MISTER, YOU JUST MADE THE BIGGEST MISTAKE OF YOUR LIFE!
--NEVER!
FOR YOUR SAKE, I HOPE THEY DO, MR. RYAN.
ACE AND ROCKY WILL NEVER COOPERATE WITH YOU--
THIS BOOK YOU GAVE THEM...WHAT IS IT? WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN...?
MILLENNIA AGO, OUR WORLD WAS THE SITE OF A COSMIC DOORWAY, MISS ROBBINS, THROUGH US, AS THROUGH A PORTAL, THE GODS COULD ROAM OUR UNIVERSE AT WILL.
GODS SUCH AS M'NAGALA THE ETERNAL... WHO HAS OBSERVED OUR CONTINUUM SINCE BEFORE THE BIRTH OF MAN...
"... AND GAVE US OUR VIOLENCE AND OUR EVIL, IN THOSE DARK DAYS WHEN ONLY SLIME CRAWLED THE EARTH.
"YET M'NAGALA AND HIS KIN WERE SHUT OFF FROM OUR COSMOS A BILLION BILLION YEARS AGO, BY FORCES THEY CALL THE GOLDEN ONES -- RIVALS OF M'NAGALA'S KIND FOR CONTROL OF ALL THE GALAXIES.
"FOR A TIME INCONCEIVEABLE TO HUMAN MENTALITY, M'NAGALA AND HIS BRETHERN WAITED FOR A CHANCE TO COME TO OUR WORLD... TO CONQUER..
"...AND TO CLAIM THE EVIL THEY HAD CREATED. IT SEEMED THAT TIME WOULD NEVER COME..."


"... AND SO M'NAGALA, ENLISTING THE AID OF HIS BROTHER, RH'THULLA OF THE WIND, AND THEIR SISTER, RAG'NARU OF THE AIR, REACHED OUT TO MAN..
"... LEAVING VISIONS WHICH TWISTED THEIR INTELLECT AND CORRUPTED THEIR VERY SOULS.
THIS HAPPENED IN THE YEARS 932 A.D., 1013 A.D., AND 1257 A.D.
ONE OF THE MEN TOUCHED WAS AN ANCESTOR OF MINE. MALCOLM MONROE.
"...TOUCHING THE MINDS OF A SELECT GROUP OF LEARNED MEN...
HE WROTE THE BOOK I GAVE YOUR COMPATRIOTS.
FOR CENTURIES, ITS FORMULAE WERE USELESS... INCOMPREHENSIBLE...: UNTIL A MAN NAMED ABRAHAM SPOKE THE SPELL WHICH RELEASED M'NAGALA*...
SWAMP THING #8. --JCH
"...ALLOWING HIM TO WALK ONCE MORE ACROSS OUR FAIR GREEN HILLS, SEEKING THE MASS HE NEEDS FOR SURVIVAL."
THEN--THE BOOK ACE AND ROCKY HAVE--
--WILL OPEN THE SEVEN DOORWAYS CONNECTING OUR WORLD TO M'NAGALA'S!
HIS FAMILY WILL JOIN HIM ON EARTH--
--AND DESTINY WILL BE FULFILLED!
HEATHCLIFF MONROE'S IS AN UNHEALTHY LAUGH, AND PERHAPS IT'S JUST AS WELL NEITHER ACE NOR ROCKY CAN HEAR HIM NOW..
THEY FEEL ILL ENOUGH AS IT IS
CRIPES, ACE, THIS STUFF IS SICK!
SKIP THE CRITIQUE AND TELL ME OUR DESTINATION, ROCKY
LONDON, OUTSIDE CHARING CROSS.
SAY, ACE, ARE WE GONNA GO THROUGH WITH IT--I MEAN, REALLY?
8
CONTINUED ON 35TH PAGE FOLLOWING

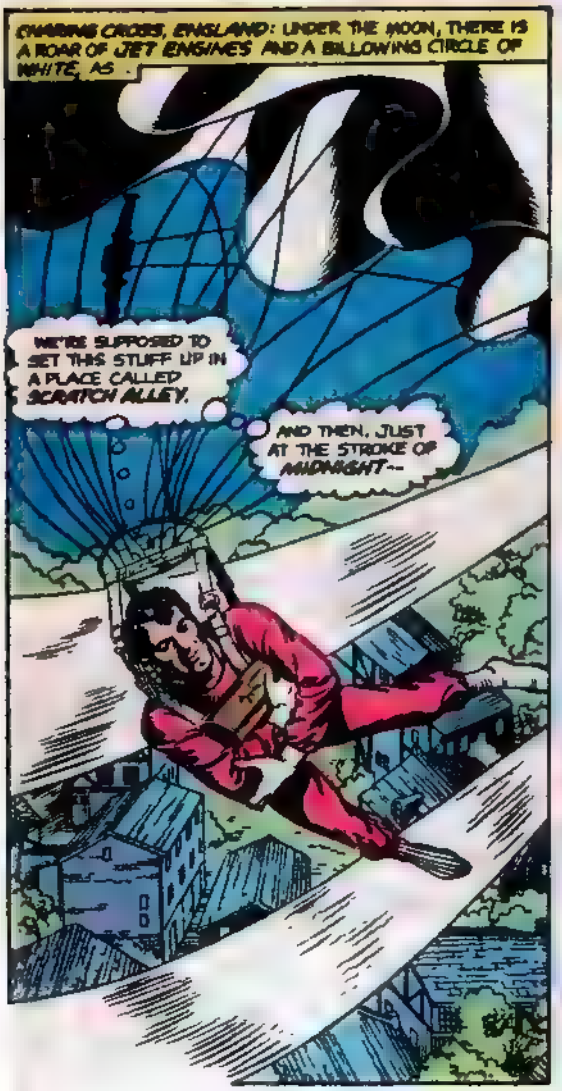
WE HAVE A CHOICE?
BESIDES, WHAT'S THE PROBLEM? WE RECITE SOME MUMBO-JUMBO, LIGHT SOME CANDLES, BURN SOME INCENSE--
IT'S NOT LIKE SETTING OFF AN ATOM BOMB.
ACE, OL' BUDDY I'M NOT SO SURE
THIS STUFF THEY LEFT US SURE GIVES ME THE CREEPS
I JUST HOPE WE KNOW WHAT WE'RE DOIN'.. 'CAUSE IF WE DON'T...
.. WE'RE IN TROUBLE BIG!
AND AS ONE CHALLENGER JET STREAKS EASTWARD TO THE ISLE OF BRITAIN, LOOPING HIGH THROUGH THE STRATOSPHERE AT TRANS-SUPERSONIC SPEED--
--ANOTHER JET, DESIGNED MUCH LIKE A NEW NASA SPACE SHUTTLE, DROPS FROM THE NIGHT SKY INTO A CLEARING OUTSIDE PERDITION!
FROM OREGON TO PENNSYLVANIA IN LESS THAN FIFTY MINUTES!
IF I HADN'T SEEN IT,, I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED IT, MISTER CLAYBURNE
THE CHALLENGERS MAY BE ARROGANT SNOBS, DOCTOR HOLLAND--
--BUT SLOWPOKES THEY'RE NOT.
AND BEFORE I FORGET--
--THANKS FOR COMING ALONG!
I COULDN'T VERY WELL SAY NO, MR. CLAYBURNE.. NOT AFTER YOU SHOWED ME THIS-- PROFESSOR HALEY'S TISSUE SAMPLE.
I'VE SEEN THIS FUNGUS BEFORE, WHEN I WAS IN PERDITION--*
*AS SWAMP THING, IN THE AFOREMENTIONED S.T. #5! - JCH
9

--AND IF IT'S RETURNED, THE POTENTIAL DANGER IS TOO HORRIBLE TO CONTEMPLATE!
AGAINST HIS WILL, ALEC HOLLAND REMEMBERS: HE REMEMBERS THE SHAMBLING MOCKERY OF A MAN HE ONCE WAS.
. AND HE REMEMBERS THE CREATURE FROM THE STARS, WHOM MEN CALL M'NAGALA.
SHUDDERING, HE THRUSTS THE MEMORY ASIDE, AS .
THAT'S MONROE'S HOUSE--SEE THE SIGN?
HEATHCLIFF MONROE M.D
PROF MUST BE IN THERE..
FOR GOD'S SAKE, WE HAVE TO FIND HIM QUICKLY--
--BEFORE HE BEGINS TO CHANGE!
CHANGE: THE WORD MAKES ALEC HOLLAND LOOK DOWNWARD, AND HE SEES AGAIN WHAT HE SAW DAYS AGO AND HAS KEPT SECRET. .
CHANGE: FOR ALEC HOLLAND, IT'S ALREADY BEGUN...
I WAS HOPING THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA COULD REVERSE WHAT'S HAPPENING TO ME--
--BUT NOW IT'S TOO LATE.
WHEN CLAYBURNE CAME TO ME AND I REALIZED WHAT WE WERE DEALING WITH--
--I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO GIVE UP MY OWN RESEARCH!
KRAKK!
THIS IS MORE IMPORTANT, AND--
CLAYBURNE! LOOK OUT!
10
CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING

GONE ARE ALL THOUGHTS OF MIGHT-HAVE-BEENS FOR ALEC HOLLAND, THIS IS THE MOMENT OF TRUTH!
DESPERATION SENDS HIM STRUGGLING, GUIDES HIS FIST TO CONNECT WITH FLESH--
--AND A FOOT INTO A JELLY-LIKE STOMACH.
YET WHAT ALEC HOLLAND KICKS IS NOT FLAB, BUT SOMETHING ELSE--
--SOMETHING DISGUSTING!
(GAAK) (CHOKE)
THEIR BODIES ..COMPLETELY DISSOLVED BY THE FUNGUS ABSORBED!
PROFESSOR MALEY IS LIKE THIS--
HELP ME
ALEC HOLLAND HAS SEEN MANY FRIGHTEN THINGS IN THE MONTHS HE WANDERED AMERICA
..EVEN SO, HIS MOUTH DRIES AND HIS GUTS CLENCH AS HE STARES AT THE THING WHICH WAS ONCE PROFESSOR MARK MALEY...
AND WHEN HE HEARS THE MAN-THING'S PAINFUL CRY, ALEC HOLLAND'S SOUL SCREAMS IN SYMPATHY...
CLAYBURNE FOR THE LOVE OF GOD
CHAPTER 4

ALL MONSTERS GOOD and EVIL

LORD LOOK AT HIM IT'S HOPELESS ..HOPELESS!
NOT. HOPELESS. NEED.. SOUND..
MY NAME'S HOLLAND, PROFESSOR. I'M A DOCTOR. IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU CAN TELL ME--


CHARING CROSS, ENGLAND: UNDER THE MOON, THERE IS A ROAR OF JET ENGINES AND A BILLOWING CIRCLE OF WHITE, AS .
WE'RE SUPPOSED TO SET THIS STUFF UP IN A PLACE CALLED SCRATCH ALLEY.
AND THEN, JUST AT THE STROKE OF MIDNIGHT--

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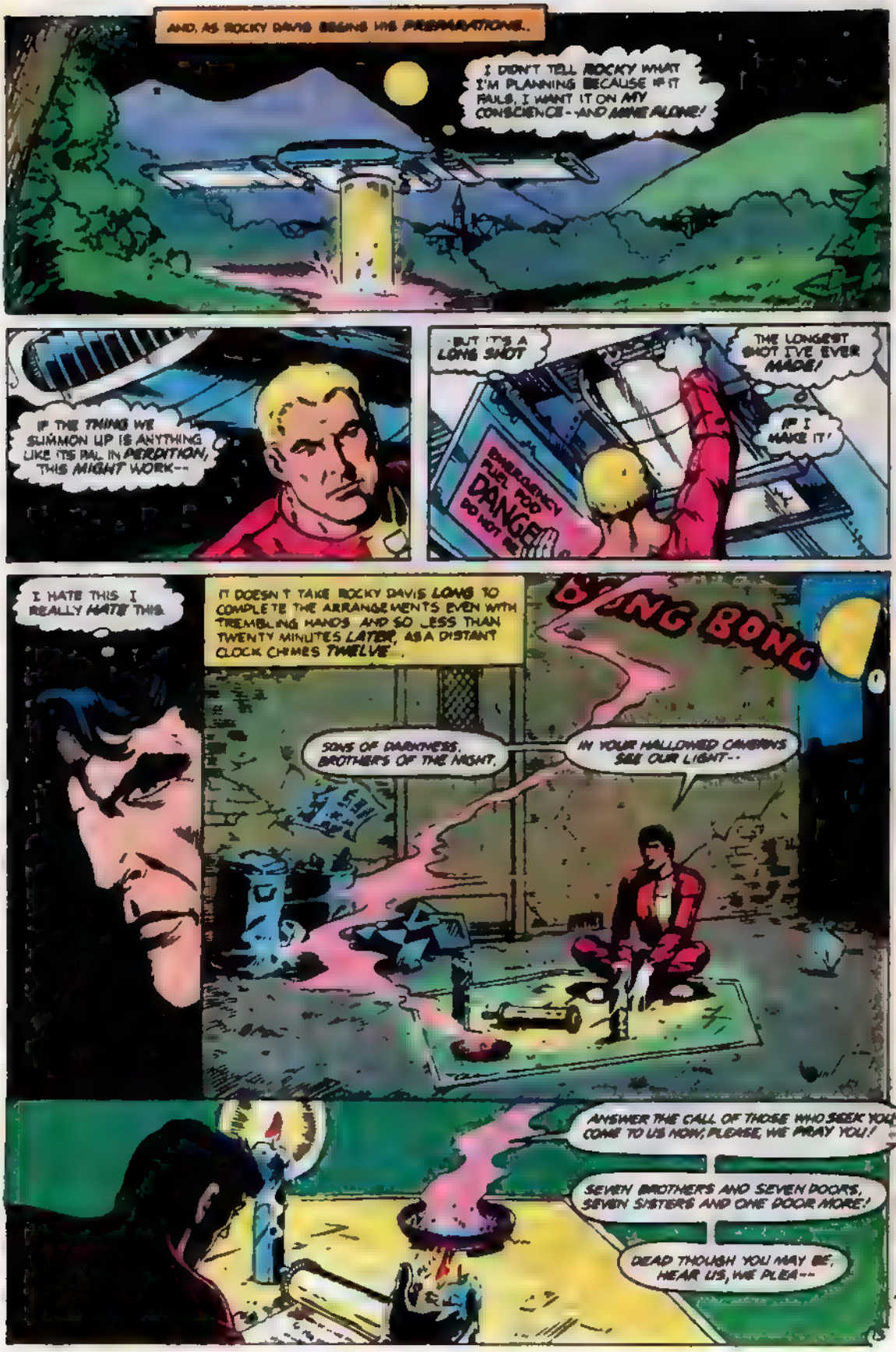

AND, AS ROCKY DAVIS BEGINS HIS PREPARATIONS...
I DON'T TELL ROCKY WHAT I'M PLANNING BECAUSE IF IT FAILS, I WANT IT ON MY CONSCIENCE--AND MINE ALONE!
IF THE THING WE SUMMON UP IS ANYTHING LIKE ITS PAL IN PERDITION, THIS MIGHT WORK--
BUT IT'S A LONG SHOT
THE LONGEST SHOT I'VE EVER MADE!
IF I MAKE IT!
EMERGENCY FUEL ROD DANGER
I HATE THIS. I REALLY HATE THIS.
IT DOESN'T TAKE ROCKY DAVIS LONG TO COMPLETE THE ARRANGEMENTS EVEN WITH TREMBLING HANDS AND SO LESS THAN TWENTY MINUTES LATER, AS A DISTANT CLOCK CHIMES TWELVE.
BONG BONG
SONS OF DARKNESS, BROTHERS OF THE NIGHT,
IN YOUR HALLOWED CAVERNS SEE OUR LIGHT--
ANSWER THE CALL OF THOSE WHO SEEK YOU! COME TO US NOW, PLEASE, WE PRAY YOU!
SEVEN BROTHERS AND SEVEN DOORS, SEVEN SISTERS AND ONE DOOR MORE!
DEAD THOUGH YOU MAY BE, HEAR US, WE PLEA--

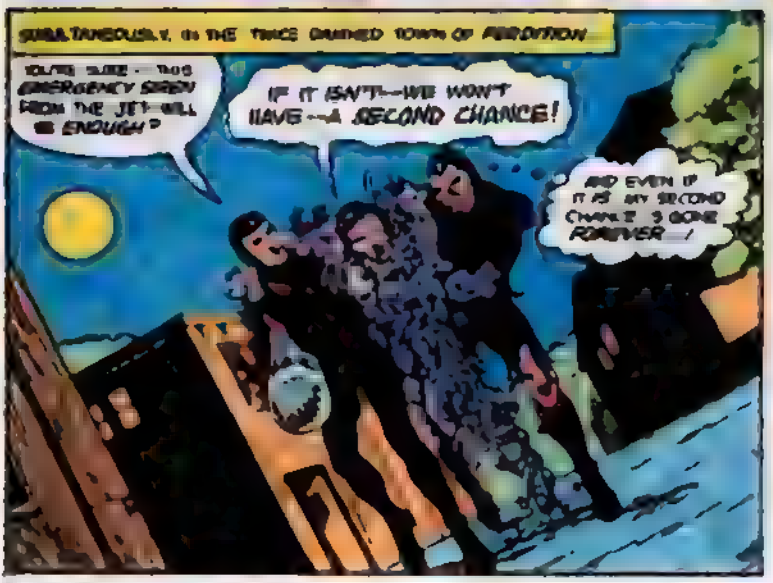
—COME TO US NOW, FULFILL YOUR DESTINY!

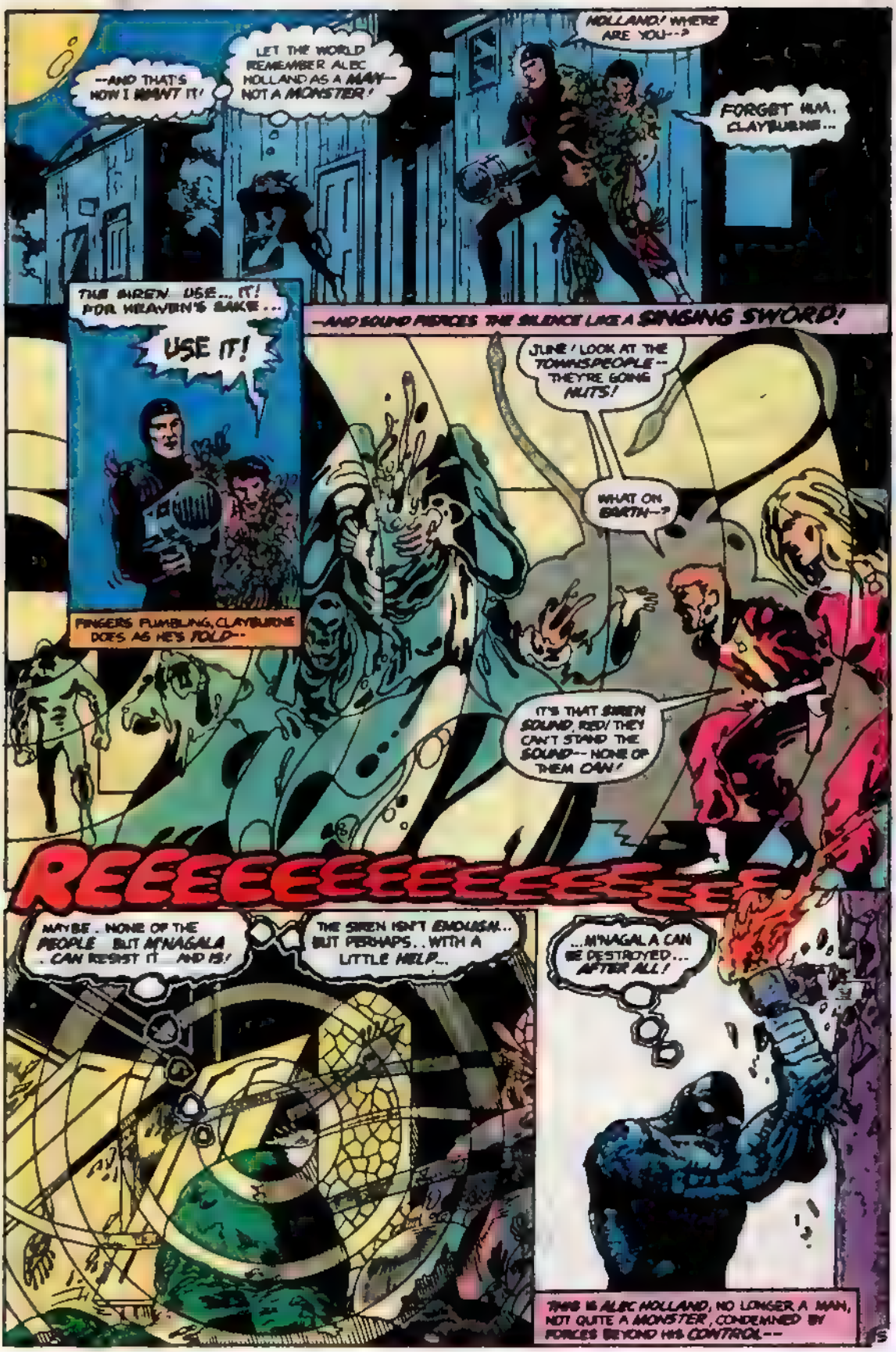
—AND IN THAT DARKENED ALLEYWAY ONE DOOR OPENS.

AND THROUGH IT COMES A NIGHTMARE!

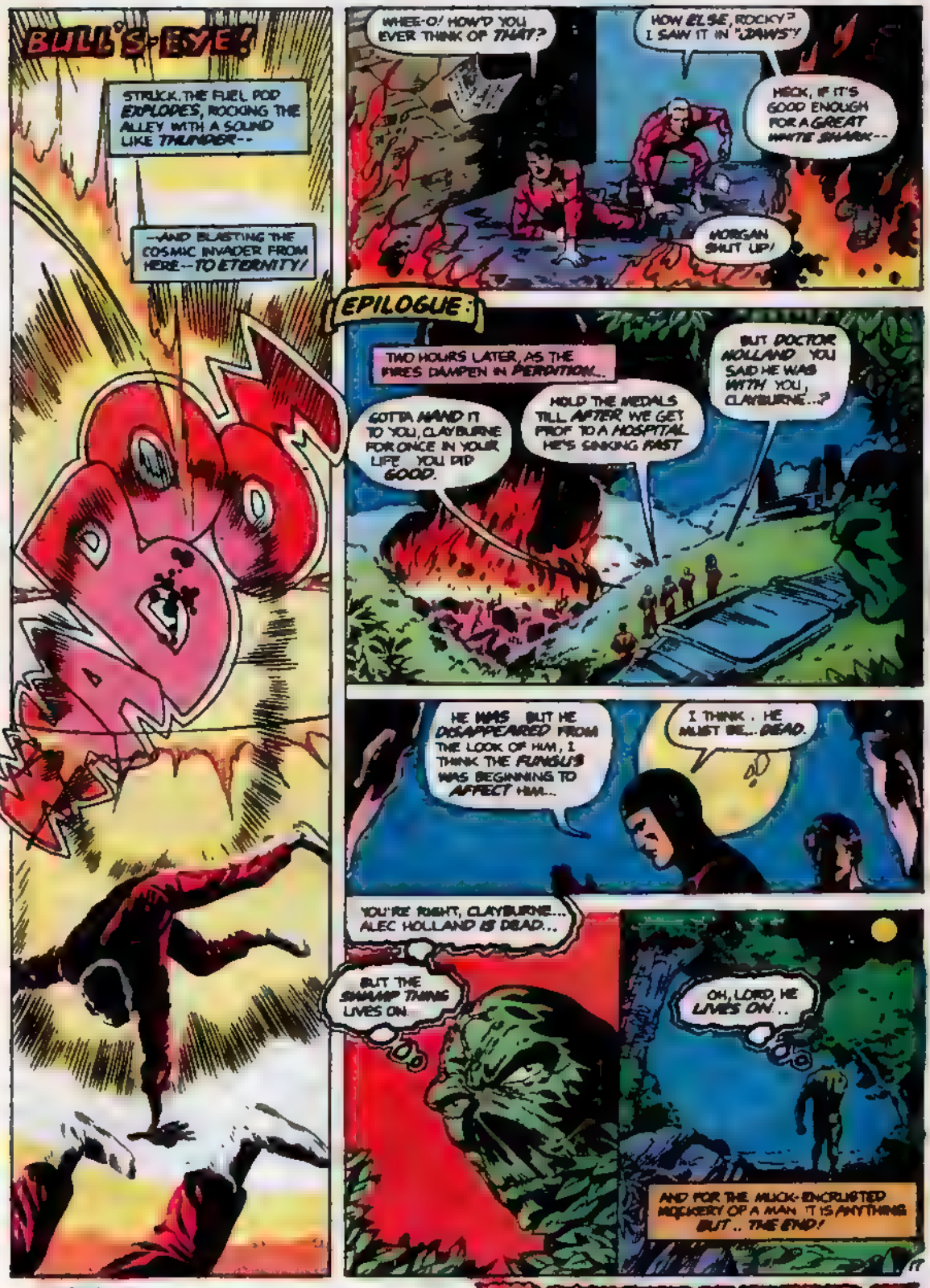
THERE IS WIND AND THERE IS COLD—

YAAAAHH!




--AND THAT'S HOW I WANT IT!
LET THE WORLD REMEMBER ALEC HOLLAND AS A MAN-- NOT A MONSTER!
HOLLAND! WHERE ARE YOU--?
FORGET HIM, CLAYBURNE...
THE SIREN... USE... IT! FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE...
USE IT!
FINGERS FUMBLING, CLAYBURNE DOES AS HE'S TOLD--
--AND SOUND PIERCES THE SILENCE LIKE A SINGING SWORD!
JUNE! LOOK AT THE TOWNSPEOPLE-- THEY'RE GOING NUTS!
WHAT ON EARTH--?
IT'S THAT SIREN SOUND, RED! THEY CAN'T STAND THE SOUND-- NONE OF THEM CAN!
REEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
MAYBE... NONE OF THE PEOPLE... BUT M'NAGALA... CAN RESIST IT... AND IS!
THE SIREN ISN'T EMOUSAN... BUT PERHAPS... WITH A LITTLE HELP...
...M'NAGALA CAN BE DESTROYED... AFTER ALL!
THIS IS ALEC HOLLAND, NO LONGER A MAN, NOT QUITE A MONSTER, CONDEMNED BY FORCES BEYOND HIS CONTROL--

SSSHHISSSHH
--BUT STILL A FIGHTER--
--STILL A HERO!
NOOO! NOT AGAIN! YOU DARE NOT DISRUPT ME AGAIN!
FLAME SPREADS OVER THE CREATURE'S SLIMEY SURFACE LIKE FIRE ON OIL, AND IN SECONDS, THE GOD FROM BEYOND IS A SPARKLING FIREBALL..
IT HEAVES WITH AN AGONY NO HUMAN MIND COULD EVER UNDERSTAND, AND AT THE SAME INSTANT, HALF A WORLD AWAY--
--THE EARTH IS DOOMED!
ROCKY! GET BACK--MOVE, CHALLENGER! MOVE!
WHAT DO YOU THINK I'M DOING, BOSS MAN? PLAYING HOPSCOTCH?
ROCKY!
THAT THING'S GOT HIM--AND IT'S EVEN WORSE THAN I'D IMAGINED!
DEAR LORD, I HOPE I'VE GUESSED RIGHT! IF THIS FUEL POD DOESN'T WORK--
POW!
SHUT UP, ROCKY--AND PRAY MY AIM'S AS SHARP AS YOUR MOUTH!
I'VE ONLY GOT TIME FOR ONE SHOT--
CONCLUDED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING


BULL'S-EYE!
STRUCK, THE FUEL POD EXPLODES, ROCKING THE ALLEY WITH A SOUND LIKE THUNDER--
--AND BLASTING THE COSMIC INVADER FROM HERE--TO ETERNITY!
WHEE-O! HOW'D YOU EVER THINK OF THAT?
HOW ELSE, ROCKY? I SAW IT IN "JAWS"!
HECK, IF IT'S GOOD ENOUGH FOR A GREAT WHITE SHARK--
MORGAN SHUT UP!
EPILOGUE:
TWO HOURS LATER, AS THE FIRES DAMPEN IN PERDITION...
GOTTA HAND IT TO YOU, CLAYBURNE FOR ONCE IN YOUR LIFE YOU DID GOOD.
HOLD THE MEDALS TILL AFTER WE GET PROF TO A HOSPITAL HE'S SINKING FAST
BUT DOCTOR HOLLAND YOU SAID HE WAS WITH YOU, CLAYBURNE...?
HE WAS BUT HE DISAPPEARED FROM THE LOOK OF HIM, I THINK THE FUNGUS WAS BEGINNING TO AFFECT HIM...
I THINK . HE MUST BE... DEAD.
YOU'RE RIGHT, CLAYBURNE... ALEC HOLLAND IS DEAD...
BUT THE SWAMP THING LIVES ON.
OH, LORD, HE LIVES ON..
AND FOR THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY OF A MAN IT IS ANYTHING BUT.. THE END!
17
NEXT ISSUE:
BECAUSE YOU ASKED FOR IT, THE STARTLING RETURN OF COMICS' MOST DEMANDED HERO--
DEADMAN
IN CHALLENGERS #84 ON SALE SEPT. 20TH

JAN. 35¢
20452
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
GUEST-STARRING: DEADMAN
THE SWAMP THING HAS GONE BERSERK--
THE ONLY WAY I CAN SAVE THE CHALLENGERS IS BY TAKING OVER PROF'S DECAYING BODY!
BUCKLER & RUBINSTEIN

CHALLENGERS of the UNKNOWN
CHAPTER 1
TO SAVE A MONSTER...
PROF IS ONE'A MY OLDEST BUDDIES IN THE WORLD... BUT HE'S DYING, AND MAYBE THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO.
FUNNY. ME AN EX-WRESTLER. I ALWAYS THOUGHT MUSCLES COULD SOLVE ANYTHING. BUT NOW...I FEEL SO USELESS, I COULD CRY!
THE FIRES ARE BURNING LOW NOW IN THE TOWN OF PERDITION, PENNSYLVANIA, BUT STILL THE CHALLENGERS STAND WATCHING, AS THOUGH PARALYZED BY HORROR--
--PERHAPS BY FEAR.
GUEST-STARRING DEADMAN & SWAMP THING!
...IN A STORY PROUDLY PRODUCED BY:
GERRY CONWAY, WRITER
KEITH GIFFEN, PENCILLER
JOHN CELARDO, INKER
JACK C. HARRIS, EDITOR
JERRY SERPE, COLORIST

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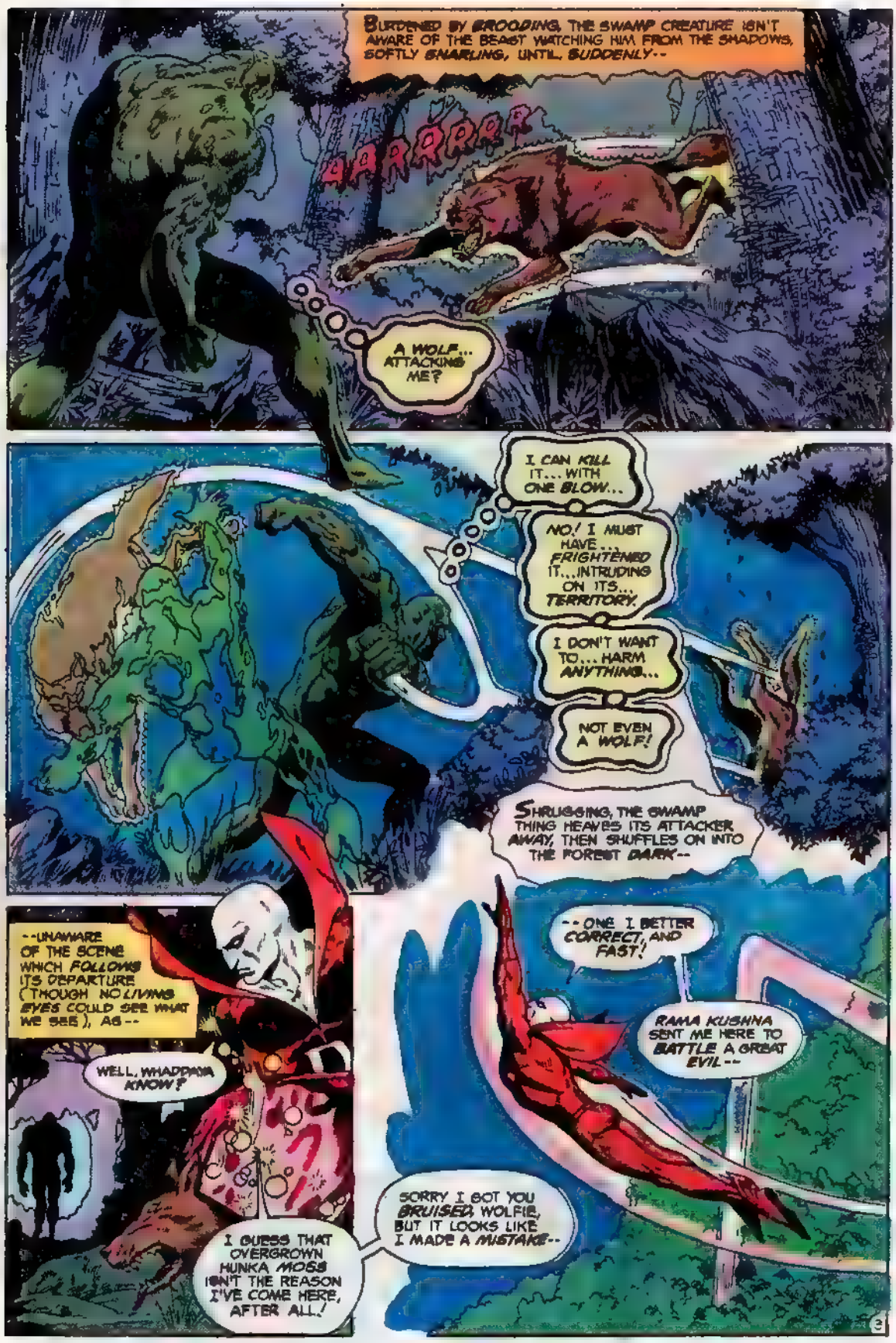
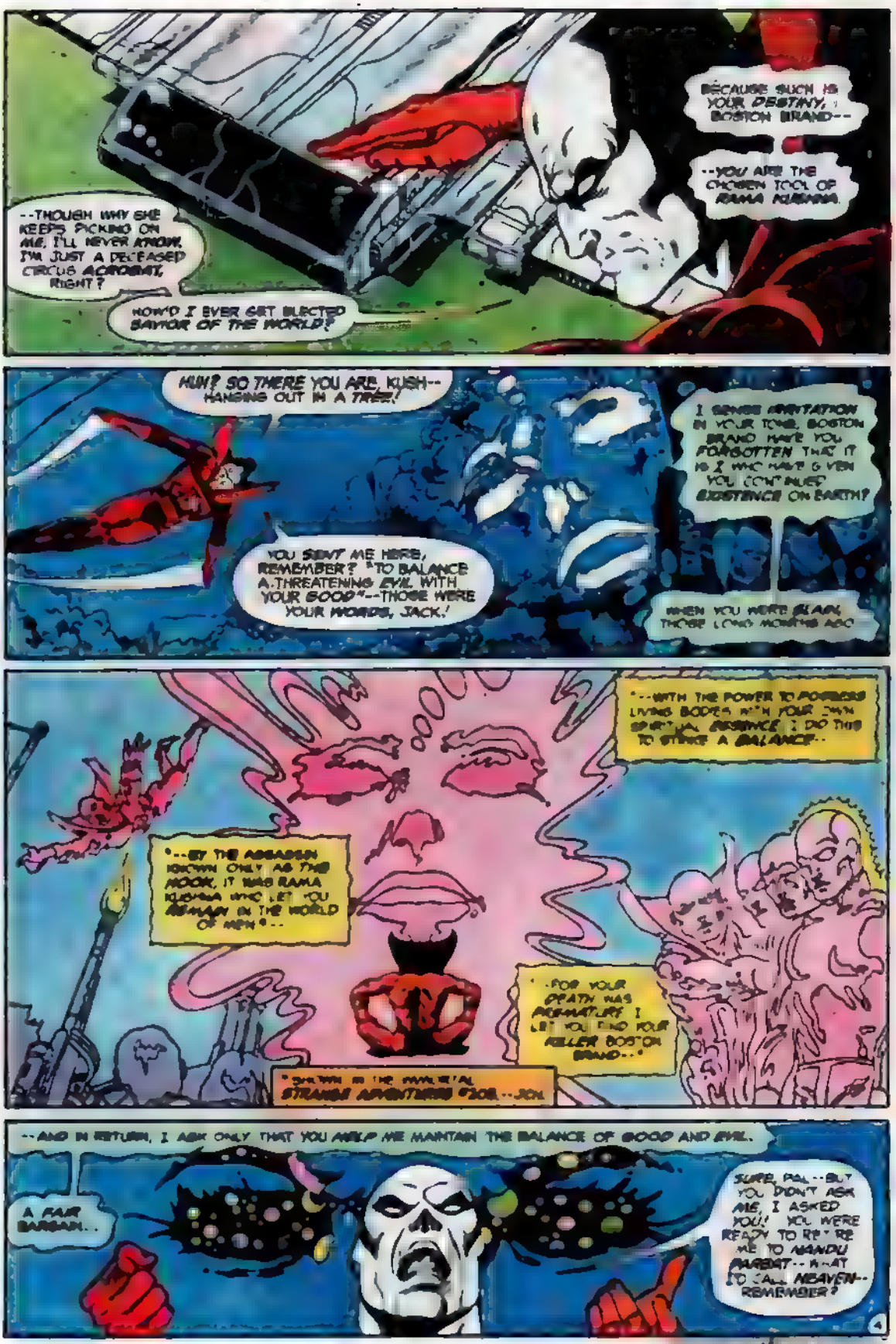
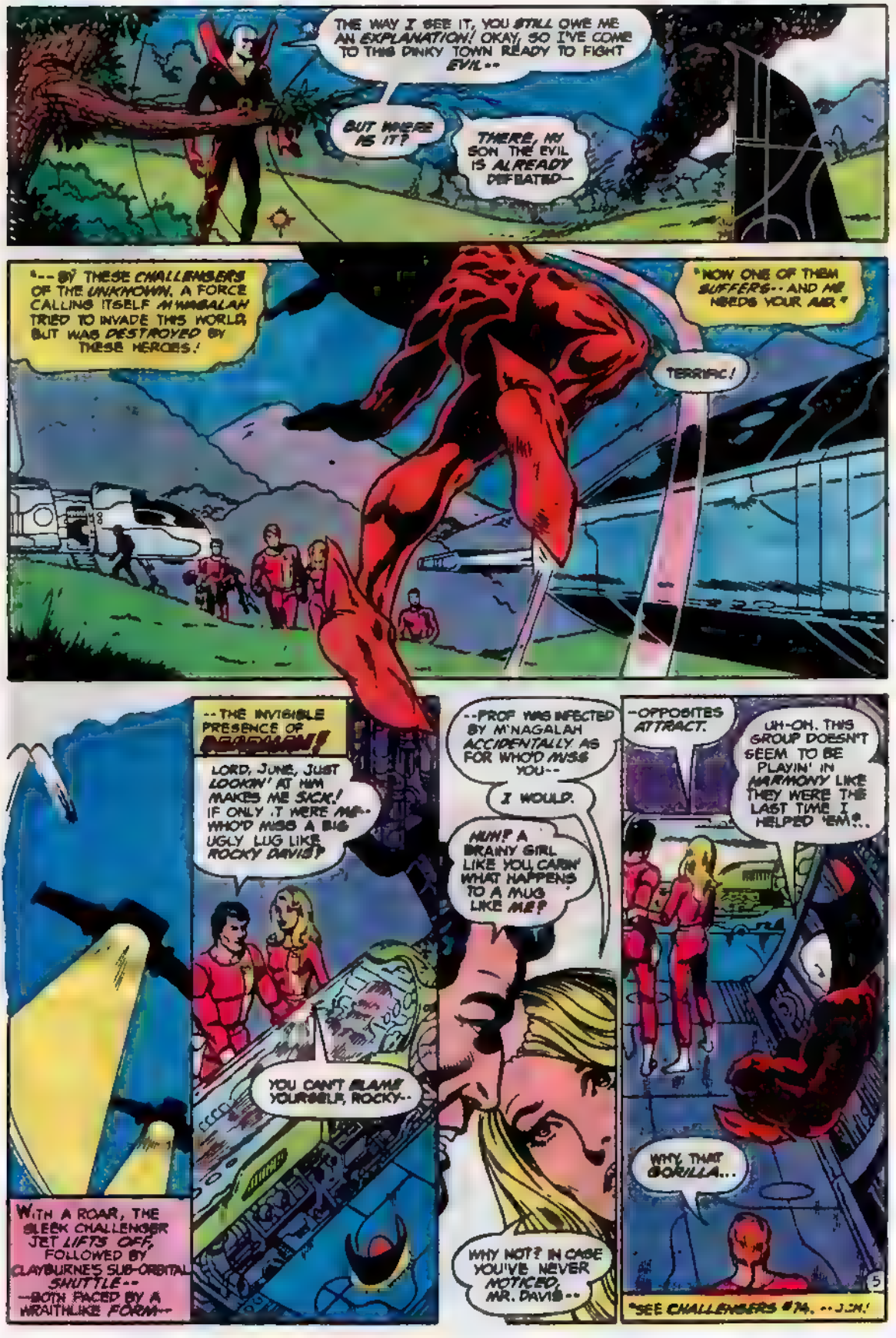
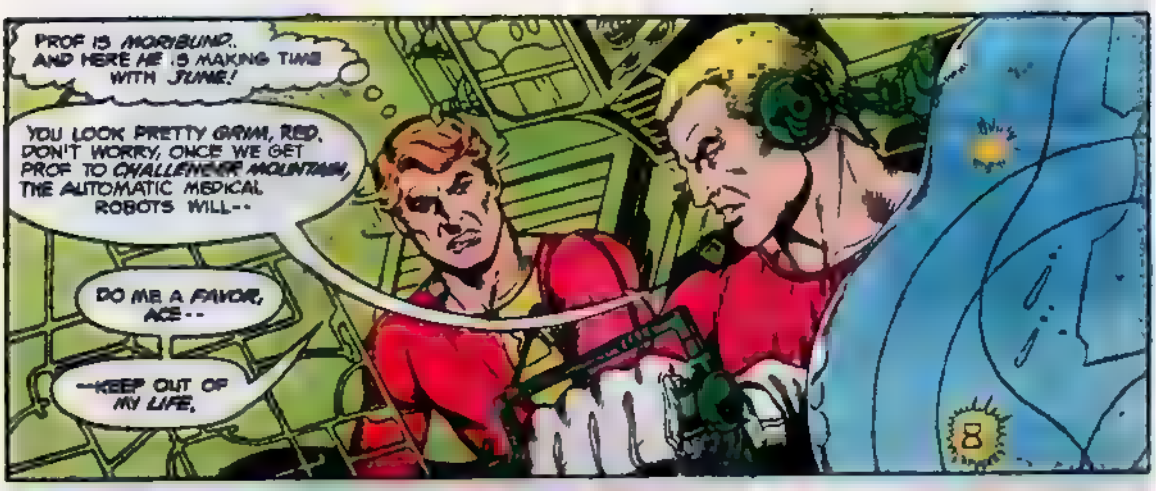
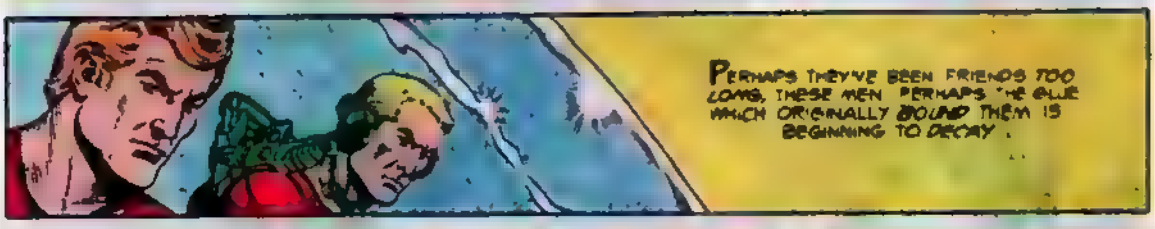
THE CHALLENGERS -- FOUR MEN WHO SURVIVED A FATAL ACCIDENT, AND NOW LIVE ON BORROWED TIME...
ROCKY DAVIS, OLYMPIC WRESTLING CHAMPION...
PROF HALEY, SCIENTIST AND DEEP-SEA DIVER...
ACE MORGAN, ONE-TIME ASTRONAUT...
RED RYAN, ELECTRONICS EXPERT AND DAREDEVIL MOUNTAIN CLIMBER...
JUNE ROBBINS, HONORARY CHALLENGER RESEARCH PHYSICIST...
...AND DUSTIN CLAYBURNE, PLAYBOY DILETTANTE.
YET THEY ARE NOT THE ONLY WATCHERS OF THIS EVIL TOWN'S DEATH...
THERE IS ALSO ONE OTHER, CONCEALED AMONG THE TREES A FEW YARDS AWAY--
--THE SHAMBLING MOCKERY OF A MAN WHO WAS ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND--THE CREATURE KNOWN AS--SWAMP THING
DON'T KNOW... WHY I'M STANDING. IT'S OVER... FOR ME HERE.
EVERYTHING'S OVER... FINISHED... INCLUDING MY HOPE ..OF A NORMAL LIFE.
MY DREAM OF LIVING AS AN ORDINARY MAN WAS ONLY A NIGHTMARE.
I'VE CHANGED BACK INTO THE SWAMP THING... THIS TIME FOREVER!*
2
*LAST ISSUE. --JCAL

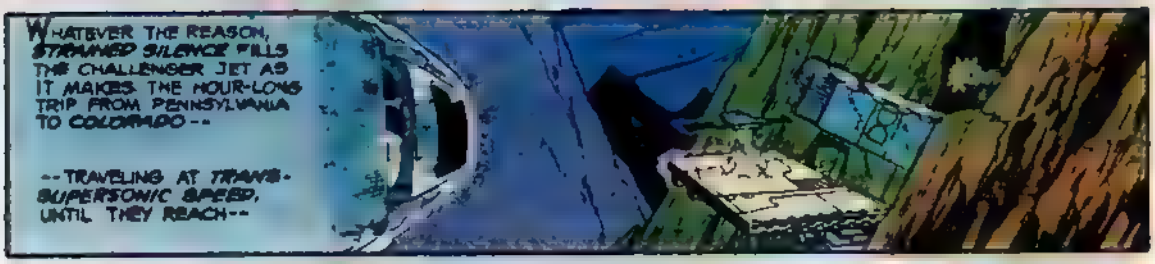

BURDENED BY BROODING, THE SWAMP CREATURE ISN'T AWARE OF THE BEAST WATCHING HIM FROM THE SHADOWS, SOFTLY SNARLING, UNTIL, SUDDENLY--
GARRRRR
A WOLF... ATTACKING ME?
I CAN KILL IT... WITH ONE BLOW...
NO! I MUST HAVE... FRIGHTENED IT... INTRUDING ON ITS... TERRITORY.
I DON'T WANT TO... HARM ANYTHING...
NOT EVEN A WOLF!
SHRUGGING, THE SWAMP THING HEAVES ITS ATTACKER AWAY, THEN SHUFFLES ON INTO THE FOREST DARK--
--ONE I BETTER CORRECT, AND FAST!
RAMA KUSHNA SENT ME HERE TO BATTLE A GREAT EVIL--
--UNAWARE OF THE SCENE WHICH FOLLOWS ITS DEPARTURE (THOUGH NO LIVING EYES COULD SEE WHAT WE SEE), AS--
WELL, WHADDAYA KNOW?
I GUESS THAT OVERGROWN HUNKA MOSS ISN'T THE REASON I'VE COME HERE, AFTER ALL!
SORRY I GOT YOU BRUISED, WOLFIE, BUT IT LOOKS LIKE I MADE A MISTAKE--

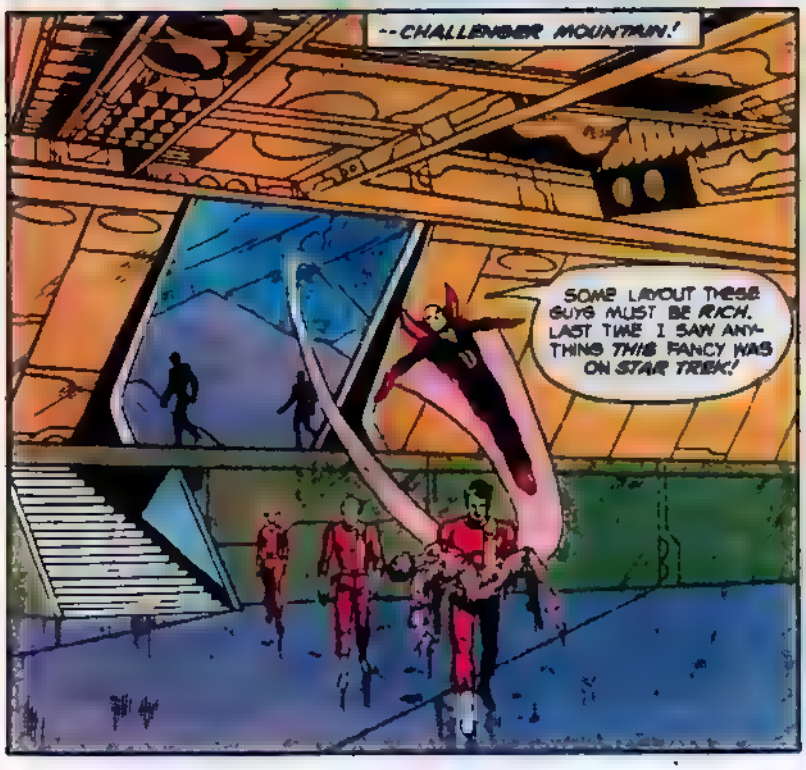

--THOUGH WHY SHE KEEPS PICKING ON ME, I'LL NEVER KNOW. I'M JUST A DECEASED CIRCUS ACROBAT, RIGHT?
HOW'D I EVER GET ELECTED SAVIOR OF THE WORLD?
BECAUSE SUCH IS YOUR DESTINY, BOSTON BRAND--
--YOU ARE THE CHOSEN TOOL OF RAMA KUSHNA.
HUH? SO THERE YOU ARE, KUSH-- HANGING OUT IN A TREE!
YOU SENT ME HERE, REMEMBER? "TO BALANCE A THREATENING EVIL WITH YOUR GOOD"--THOSE WERE YOUR WORDS, JACK!
I SENSE ANIMATION IN YOUR TOMB, BOSTON BRAND. HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THAT IT IS I WHO HAVE GIVEN YOU YOUR UNDEAD EXISTENCE ON EARTH?
WHEN YOU WERE SLAIN, THOSE LONG MONTHS AGO
"--WITH THE POWER TO POSSESS LIVING BODIES WITH YOUR OWN SPIRITUAL ESSENCE, I DID THIS TO STRIKE A BALANCE--
"--BY THE ASSASSIN KNOWN ONLY AS THE HOOK, IT WAS RAMA KUSHNA WHO LET YOU REMAIN IN THE WORLD OF MEN."--
"--FOR YOUR DEATH WAS PREMATURE! I LET YOU FIND YOUR KILLER BOSTON BRAND--"
"--AND IN RETURN, I ASK ONLY THAT YOU AID ME MAINTAIN THE BALANCE OF GOOD AND EVIL.
A FAIR BARGAIN--
SURE, PAL--BUT YOU DIDN'T ASK ME, I ASKED YOU! YOU WERE READY TO RETIRE ME TO NANDU PARBAT--WHAT TO CALL HEAVEN--REMEMBER?
4

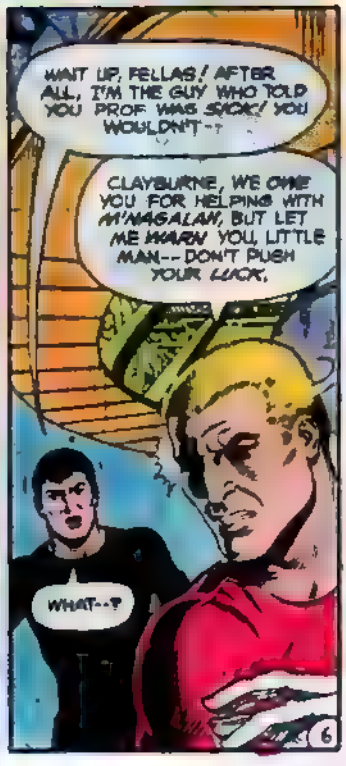

THE WAY I SEE IT, YOU STILL OWE ME AN EXPLANATION! OKAY, SO I'VE COME TO THIS DINKY TOWN READY TO FIGHT EVIL--
BUT WHERE IS IT?
THERE, MY SON THE EVIL IS ALREADY DEFEATED--
"-- BY THESE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN, A FORCE CALLING ITSELF M'NAGALAH TRIED TO INVADE THIS WORLD, BUT WAS DESTROYED BY THESE HEROES!
"NOW ONE OF THEM SUFFERS-- AND ME NEEDS YOUR AID."
TERRIFIC!
--THE INVISIBLE PRESENCE OF REDMAW!
LORD, JUNE, JUST LOOKIN' AT HIM MAKES ME SICK! IF ONLY .T WERE ME-- WHO'D MISS A BIG UGLY LUG LIKE ROCKY DAVIS?
YOU CAN'T BLAME YOURSELF, ROCKY--
WITH A ROAR, THE SLEEK CHALLENGER JET LIFTS OFF, FOLLOWED BY CLAYBURNE'S SUB-ORBITAL SHUTTLE-- --BOTH FACED BY A WRAITHLIKE FORM--
--PROF WAS INFECTED BY M'NAGALAH ACCIDENTALLY AS FOR WHO'D MISS YOU--
I WOULD.
HUH? A BRAINY GIRL LIKE YOU, CARIN' WHAT HAPPENS TO A MUG LIKE ME?
WHY NOT? IN CASE YOU'VE NEVER NOTICED, MR. DAVIS--
-OPPOSITES ATTRACT.
UH-OH. THIS GROUP DOESN'T SEEM TO BE PLAYIN' IN HARMONY LIKE THEY WERE THE LAST TIME I HELPED 'EM...
WHY, THAT GORILLA...
5
*SEE CHALLENGERS #74. --J.M.!

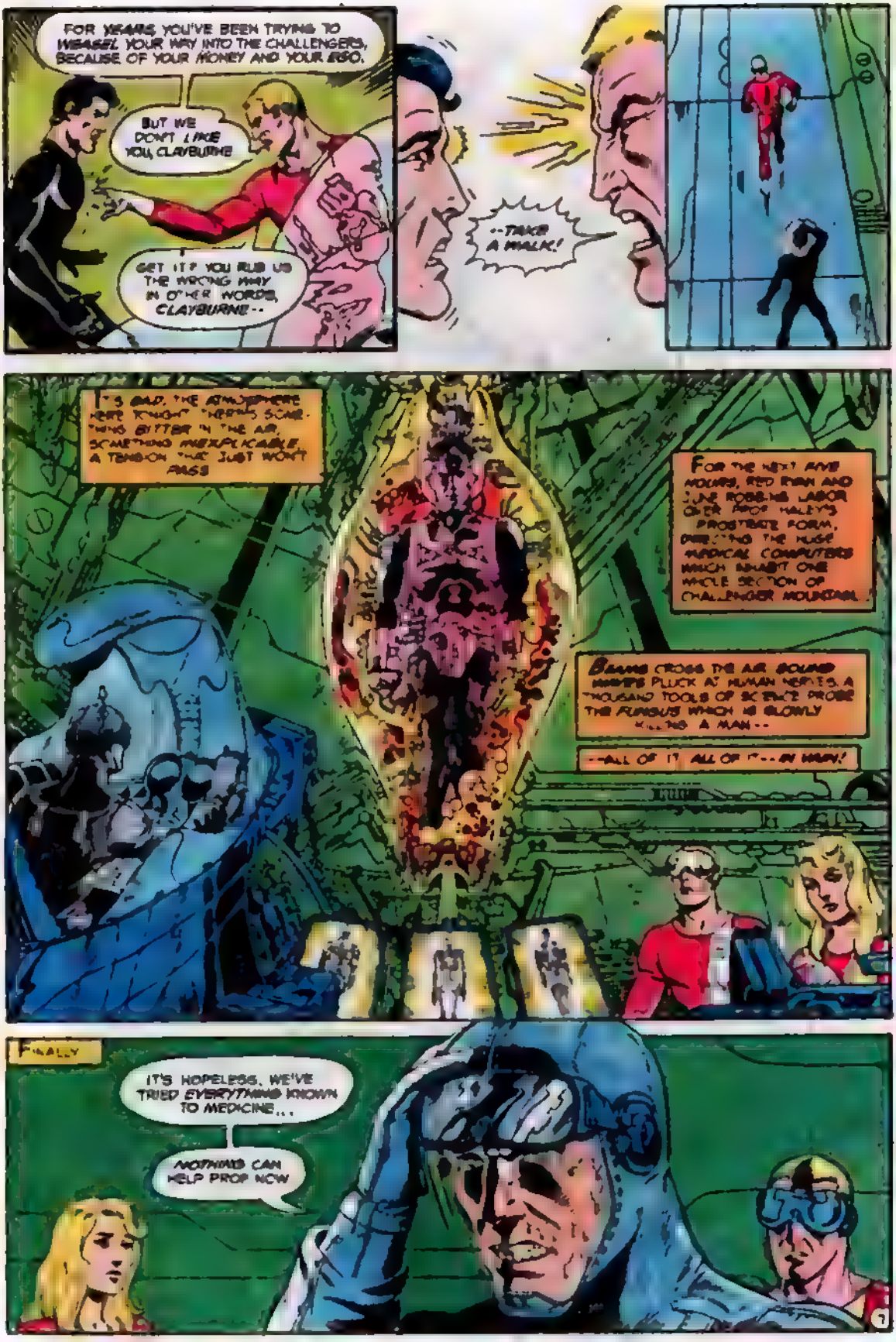

PROF IS MORIBUND. AND HERE HE IS MAKING TIME WITH JUNE!
YOU LOOK PRETTY GRIM, RED. DON'T WORRY, ONCE WE GET PROF TO CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN, THE AUTOMATIC MEDICAL ROBOTS WILL--
DO ME A FAVOR, ACE--
--KEEP OUT OF MY LIFE.
8

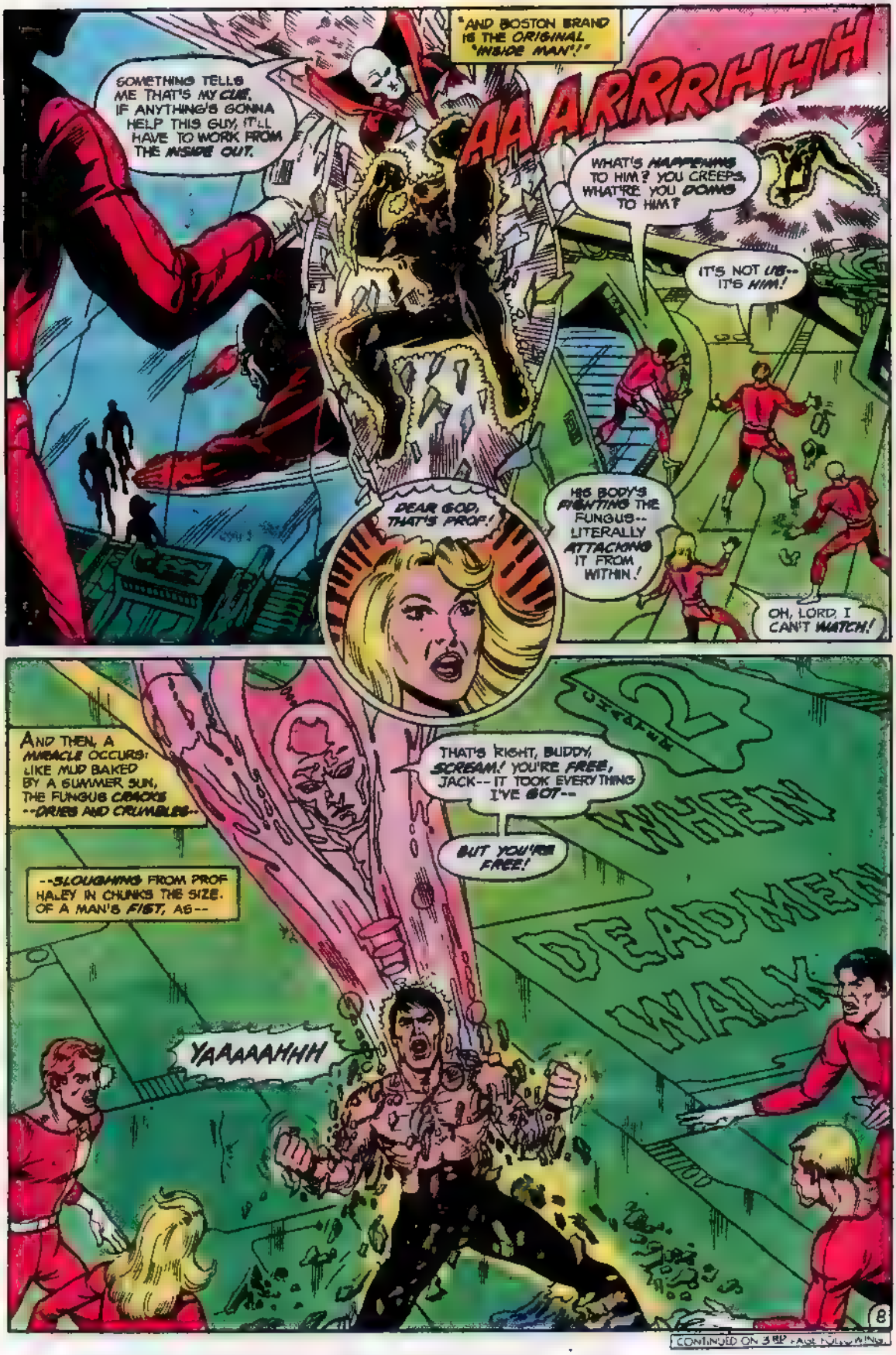

PERHAPS THEY'VE BEEN FRIENDS TOO LONG. THESE MEN. PERHAPS THE GLUE WHICH ORIGINALLY BOUND THEM IS BEGINNING TO DECAY.


WHATEVER THE REASON, STRAINED SILENCE FILLS THE CHALLENGER JET AS IT MAKES THE HOUR-LONG TRIP FROM PENNSYLVANIA TO COLORADO--
--TRAVELING AT TRANS-SUPERSONIC SPEED, UNTIL THEY REACH--


--CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN!
SOME LAYOUT THESE GUYS MUST BE RICH. LAST TIME I SAW ANYTHING THIS FANCY WAS ON STAR TREK!


WAIT UP, FELLAS! AFTER ALL, I'M THE GUY WHO TOLD YOU PROF WAS SICK! YOU WOULDN'T--?
CLAYBURNE, WE OWE YOU FOR HELPING WITH M'NAGALAN, BUT LET ME WARN YOU, LITTLE MAN-- DON'T PUSH YOUR LUCK.
WHAT--?
6


FOR YEARS, YOU'VE BEEN TRYING TO WEASEL YOUR WAY INTO THE CHALLENGERS, BECAUSE OF YOUR MONEY AND YOUR EGO.
BUT WE DON'T LIKE YOU, CLAYBURNE
GET IT? YOU RUB US THE WRONG WAY IN OTHER WORDS, CLAYBURNE--
--TAKE A WALK!
IT'S BAD. THE ATMOSPHERE HERE TONIGHT HERALDS SOMETHING BITTER IN THE AIR, SOMETHING INEXPLICABLE, A TENSION THAT JUST WON'T PASS
FOR THE NEXT FIVE HOURS, RED RYAN AND JUNE ROBBINS LABOR OVER PROF HALEY'S PROSTRATE FORM, DIRECTING THE HUGE MEDICAL COMPUTERS WHICH INHABIT ONE WHOLE SECTION OF CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN.
BEAMS CROSS THE AIR, SOUND WAVES PLUCK AT HUMAN NERVES, A THOUSAND TOOLS OF SCIENCE PROBE THE FURIOUS WHICH IS SLOWLY KILLING A MAN--
--ALL OF IT, ALL OF IT--IN VAIN!
FINALLY
IT'S HOPELESS. WE'VE TRIED EVERYTHING KNOWN TO MEDICINE...
NOTHING CAN HELP PROF NOW


"AND BOSTON BRAND IS THE ORIGINAL "INSIDE MAN"!"
AAARRRHHH
SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT'S MY CUE. IF ANYTHING'S GONNA HELP THIS GUY, IT'LL HAVE TO WORK FROM THE INSIDE OUT.
WHAT'S HAPPENING TO HIM? YOU CREEPS, WHAT'RE YOU GONNA TO HIM?
IT'S NOT US-- IT'S HIM!
DEAR GOD, THAT'S PROF!
HIS BODY'S FIGHTING THE FUNGUS-- LITERALLY ATTACKING IT FROM WITHIN!
OH, LORD, I CAN'T WATCH!
AND THEN, A MIRACLE OCCURS: LIKE MUD BAKED BY A SUMMER SUN, THE FUNGUS CRACKS --DRIES AND CRUMBLES--
THAT'S RIGHT, BUDDY, SCREAM! YOU'RE FREE, JACK-- IT TOOK EVERYTHING I'VE GOT--
BUT YOU'RE FREE!
--SLOUGHING FROM PROF HALEY IN CHUNKS THE SIZE OF A MAN'S FIST, AS--
YAAAAHHH
WHEN DEADMEN WALK
8
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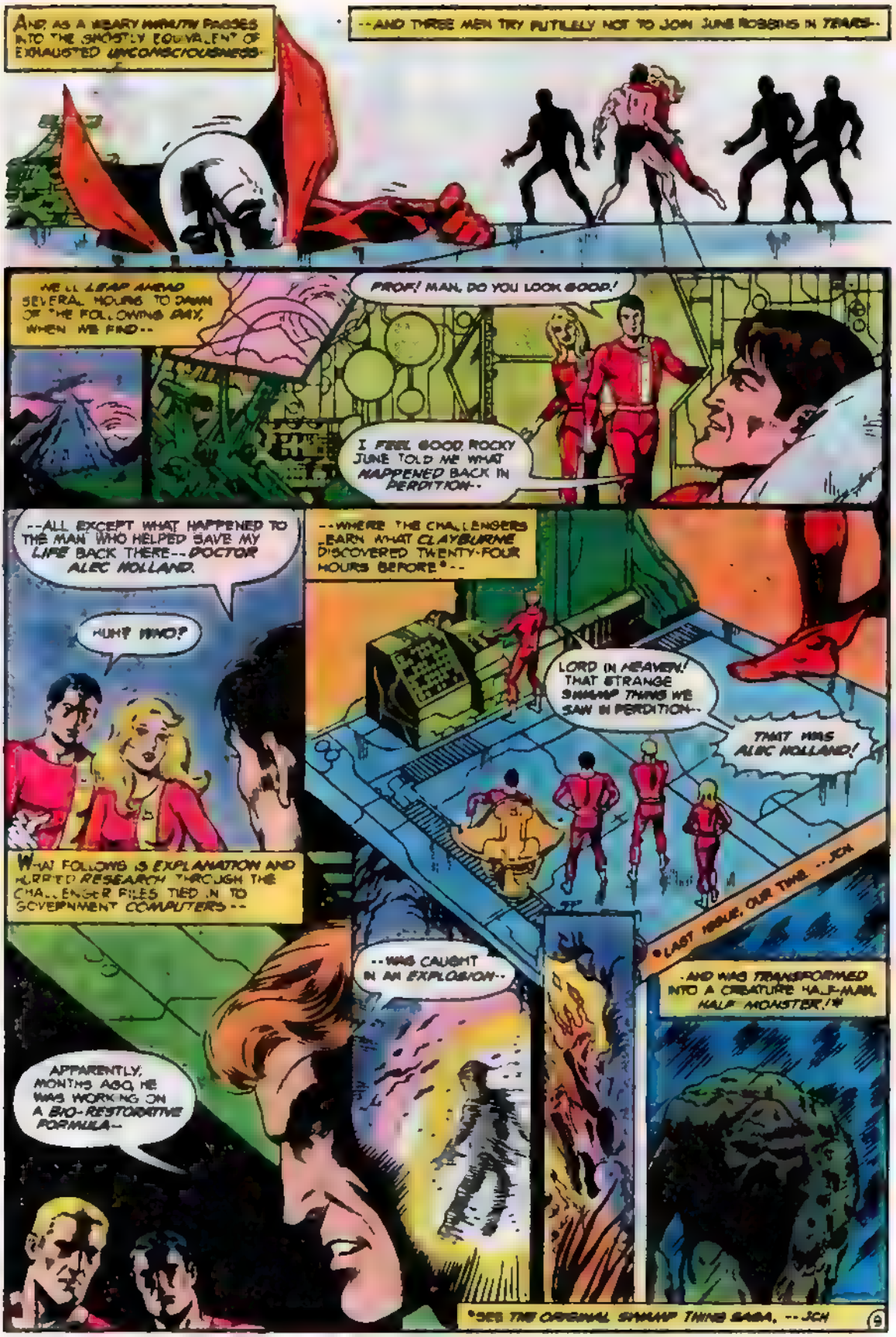
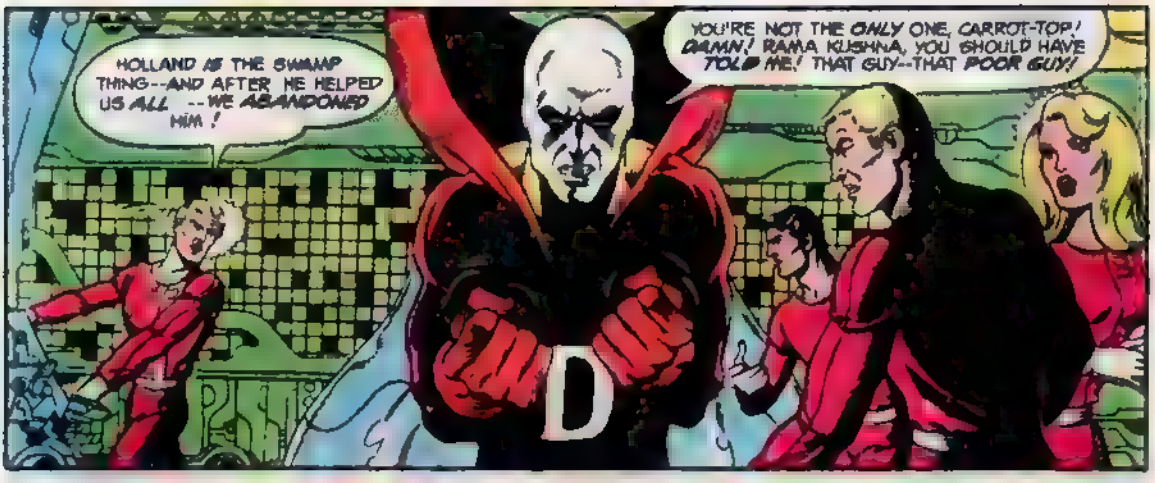
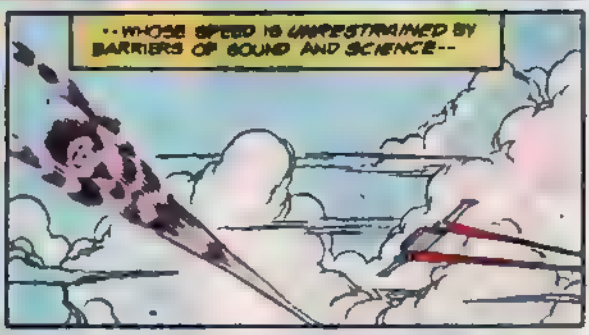

AND, AS A WEARY MANKIND PASSES INTO THE GHOSTLY EQUIVALENT OF EXHAUSTED UNCONSCIOUSNESS--
--AND THREE MEN TRY FUTILELY NOT TO JOIN JUNE ROBBINS IN TEARS--
WE'LL LEAP AHEAD SEVERAL HOURS TO DAWN OF THE FOLLOWING DAY, WHEN WE FIND--
PROF! MAN, DO YOU LOOK GOOD!
I FEEL GOOD. ROCKY JUNE TOLD ME WHAT HAPPENED BACK IN PERDITION--
--ALL EXCEPT WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MAN WHO HELPED SAVE MY LIFE BACK THERE--DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND.
HUH? WHO?
--WHERE THE CHALLENGERS LEARN WHAT CLAYBURNE DISCOVERED TWENTY-FOUR HOURS BEFORE*--
LORD IN HEAVEN! THAT STRANGE SWAMP THING WE SAW IN PERDITION--
THAT WAS ALEC HOLLAND!
WHAT FOLLOWS IS EXPLANATION AND HURRIED RESEARCH THROUGH THE CHALLENGER FILES TIED IN TO GOVERNMENT COMPUTERS--
*LAST ISSUE, OUR TIME. --JCH
--AND WAS TRANSFORMED INTO A CREATURE HALF-MAN, HALF MONSTER!*
--WAS CAUGHT IN AN EXPLOSION--
APPARENTLY, MONTHS AGO, HE WAS WORKING ON A BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA--
*SEE THE ORIGINAL SWAMP THING SAGA. --JCH

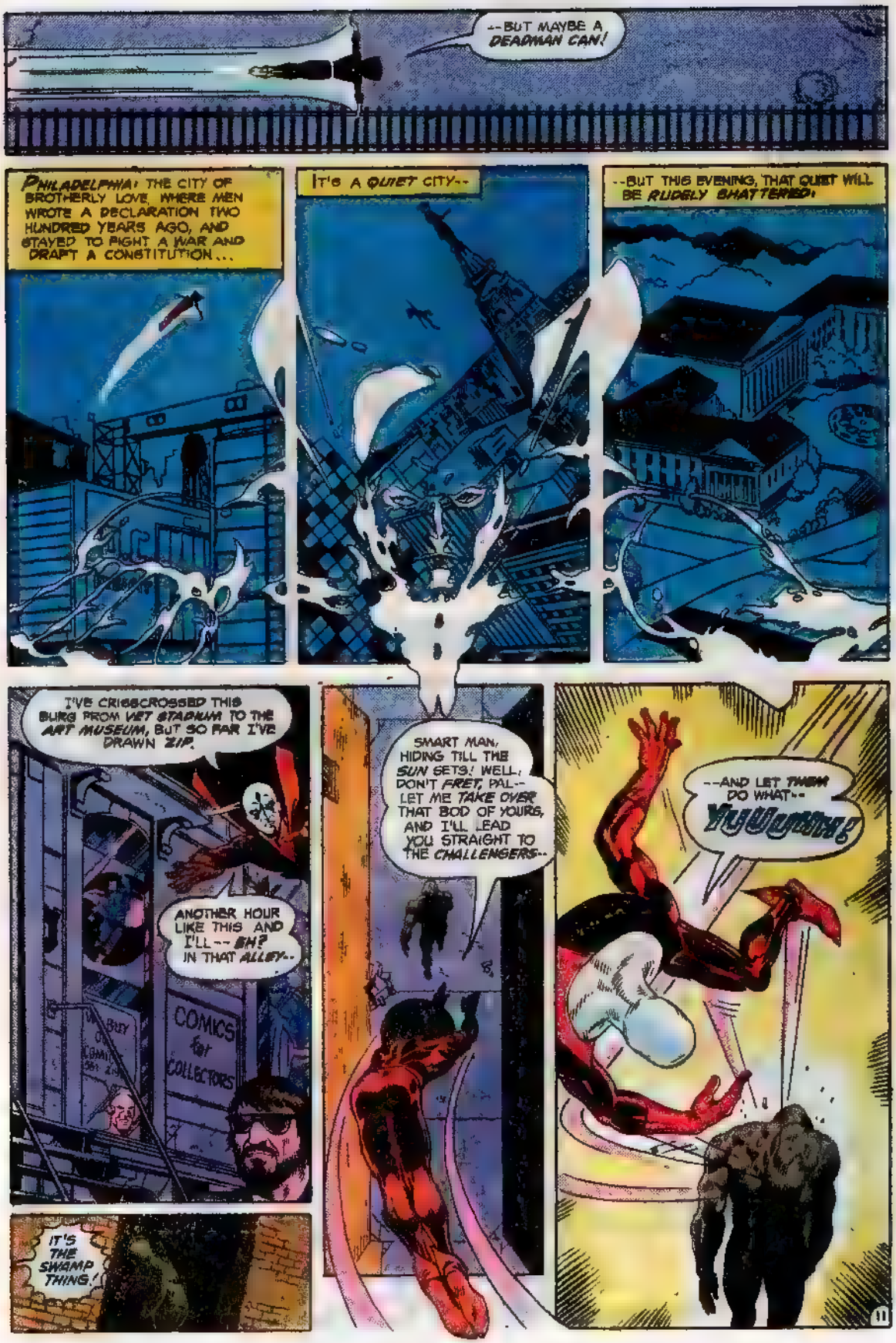

HOLLAND IS THE SWAMP THING--AND AFTER HE HELPED US ALL --WE ABANDONED HIM!
YOU'RE NOT THE ONLY ONE, CARROT-TOP! DAMN! RAMA KUSHNA, YOU SHOULD HAVE TOLD ME! THAT GUY--THAT POOR GUY!

BUT--WHAT'RE WE GONNA DO?
THE ONLY MORAL THING POSSIBLE, ROCKY FIND ALEC HOLLAND--
--NO MATTER WHAT THE COST-- FIND HIM!

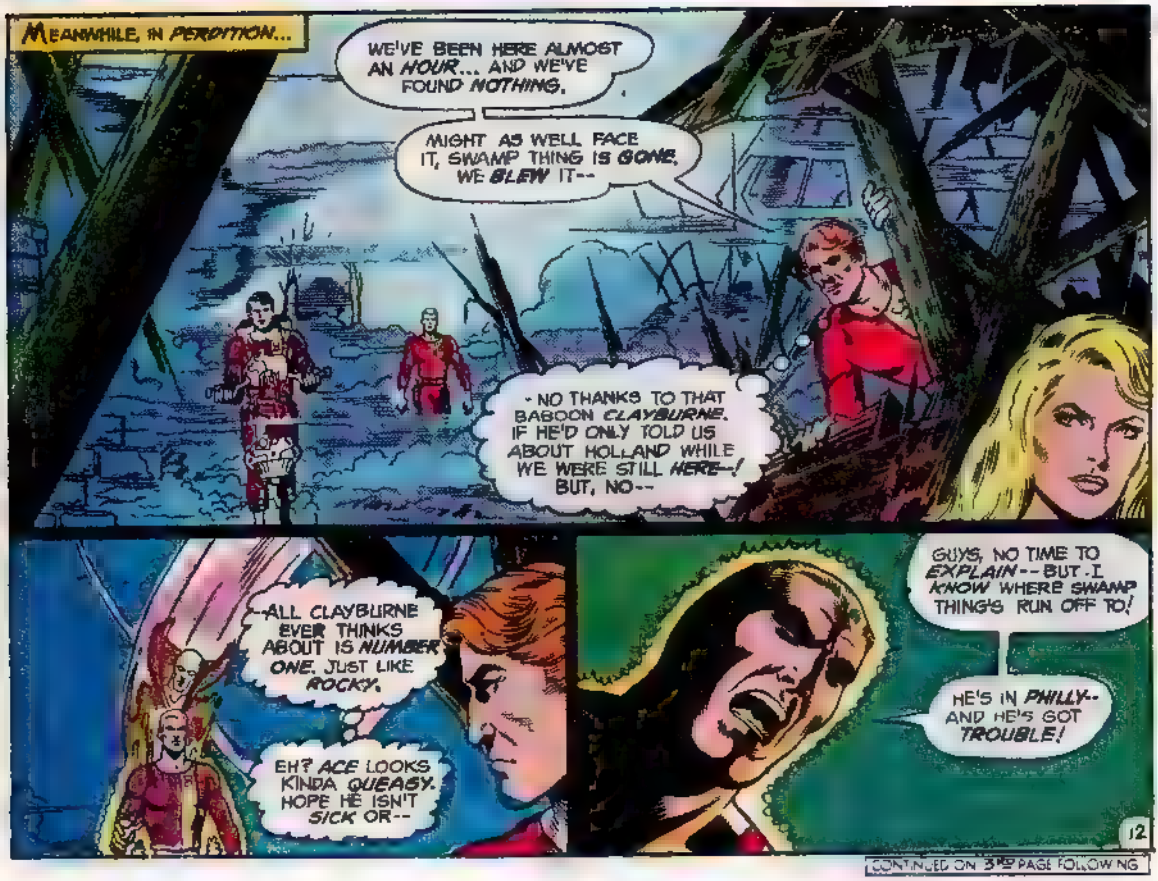
WITHIN MOMENTS, A JET STREAKS EASTWARD--
ACCOMPANIED BY AN UNSEEN GHOST--


--WHOSE SPEED IS UNRESTRAINED BY BARRIERS OF SOUND AND SCIENCE--

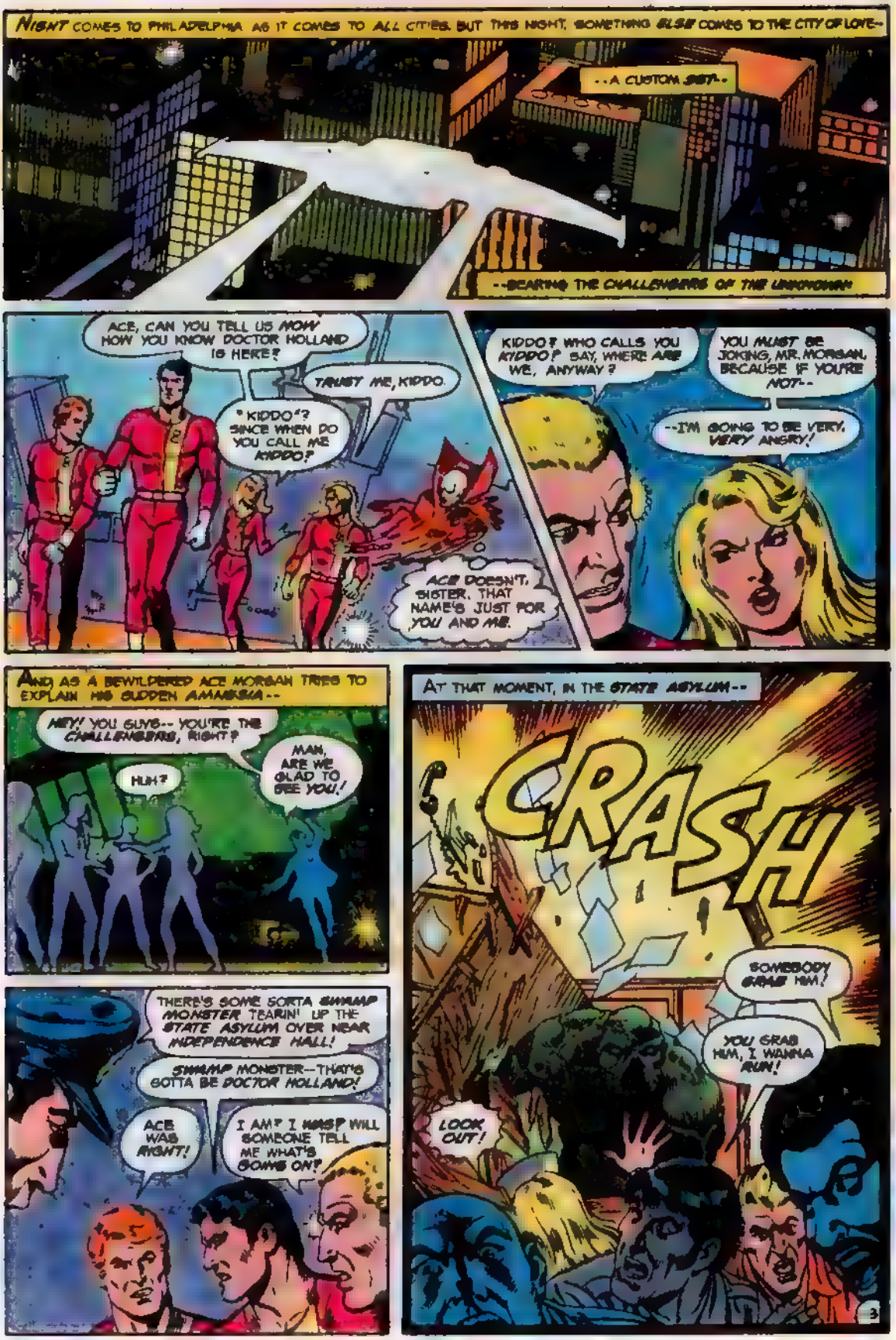
ENABLING HIM TO PRECEDE THE CHALLENGER SST TO THE ONCE-TOWN OF PERDITION, WHERE HE DISCOVERS--
SWAMP THING'S SCENT!
HE WAS HERE-- I CAN SEE HIS FOOTPRINTS--
BUT HE'S WANDERED OFF--STRAIGHT TO THESE RAILROAD TRACKS!
HE MUST HAVE PICKED UP A SOUTHBOUND FREIGHT TO PHILADELPHIA! THAT'S TERRIFIC, JUST GREAT! THE CHALLENGERS WILL NEVER FIND HIM THERE--


--BUT MAYBE A DEADMAN CAN!
PHILADELPHIA: THE CITY OF BROTHERLY LOVE, WHERE MEN WROTE A DECLARATION TWO HUNDRED YEARS AGO, AND STAYED TO FIGHT A WAR AND DRAFT A CONSTITUTION...
IT'S A QUIET CITY--
--BUT THIS EVENING, THAT QUIET WILL BE RUDELY SHATTERED!
I'VE CRISSCROSSED THIS BURG FROM VET STADIUM TO THE ART MUSEUM, BUT SO FAR I'VE DRAWN ZIP.
ANOTHER HOUR LIKE THIS AND I'LL-- EH? IN THAT ALLEY--
COMICS for COLLECTORS
IT'S THE SWAMP THING!
SMART MAN, HIDING TILL THE SUN SETS! WELL, DON'T FRET, PAL-- LET ME TAKE OVER THAT BOD OF YOURS, AND I'LL LEAD YOU STRAIGHT TO THE CHALLENGERS--
--AND LET THEM DO WHAT--
YUUUUUUK!
11

WAVES OF AGONY SEND DEADMAN SPINNING BACKWARD AND THEN ...
WHAT HIT ME? I NEVER FELT ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE--EVER!
IT WAS LIKE SLAMMING INTO A BRICK WALL...
A WALL...INSIDE OF THE SWAMP THING?
AS THOUGH IN ANSWER, THE MAN-MONSTER TURNS--
OH MY GOD! NO WONDER I COULDN'T ENTER HIM... HE'S POSSESSED!
SOMEONE'S ALREADY INSIDE!
NO WAY I CAN HANDLE THIS SNAG ALONE! I NEED PHYSICAL HELP!
--AND THAT MEANS THE CHALLENGERS!


MEANWHILE, IN PERDITION...
WE'VE BEEN HERE ALMOST AN HOUR... AND WE'VE FOUND NOTHING.
MIGHT AS WELL FACE IT, SWAMP THING IS GONE. WE BLEW IT--
- NO THANKS TO THAT BABOON CLAYBURNE. IF HE'D ONLY TOLD US ABOUT HOLLAND WHILE WE WERE STILL HERE--! BUT, NO--
--ALL CLAYBURNE EVER THINKS ABOUT IS NUMBER ONE. JUST LIKE ROCKY.
EH? ACE LOOKS KINDA QUEASY. HOPE HE ISN'T SICK OR--
GUYS, NO TIME TO EXPLAIN -- BUT I KNOW WHERE SWAMP THING'S RUN OFF TO!
HE'S IN PHILLY-- AND HE'S GOT TROUBLE!

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING


NIGHT COMES TO PHILADELPHIA AS IT COMES TO ALL CITIES. BUT THIS NIGHT, SOMETHING ELSE COMES TO THE CITY OF LOVE--
--A CUSTOM SET!--
--BEARING THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN!
ACE, CAN YOU TELL US NOW HOW YOU KNOW DOCTOR HOLLAND IS HERE?
TRUST ME, KIDDO.
"KIDDO"? SINCE WHEN DO YOU CALL ME KIDDO?
ACE DOESN'T, SISTER. THAT NAME'S JUST FOR YOU AND ME.
KIDDO? WHO CALLS YOU KIDDO? SAY, WHERE ARE WE, ANYWAY?
YOU MUST BE JOKING, MR. MORGAN, BECAUSE IF YOU'RE NOT--
--I'M GOING TO BE VERY, VERY ANGRY!
AND AS A BEWILDERED ACE MORGAN TRIES TO EXPLAIN HIS SUDDEN AMNESIA--
HEY! YOU GUYS-- YOU'RE THE CHALLENGERS, RIGHT?
HUH?
MAN, ARE WE GLAD TO SEE YOU!
AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE STATE ASYLUM--
CRASH!
SOMEBODY GRAB HIM!
YOU GRAB HIM, I WANNA RUN!
LOOK OUT!
THERE'S SOME SORTA SWAMP MONSTER TEARIN' UP THE STATE ASYLUM OVER NEAR INDEPENDENCE HALL!
SWAMP MONSTER--THAT'S GOTTA BE DOCTOR HOLLAND!
ACE WAS RIGHT!
I AM? I WAS? WILL SOMEONE TELL ME WHAT'S GOING ON?
3

OH, I'M GONNA REGRET THIS IN THE MORNING!
JUST SHUT UP AND DO IT! WHAT DO YOU THINK WE'RE GETTING PAID FOR--KNITTING?
YAAAAAHHHH!
THOOM
THAT'S IT EXACTLY, MY LITTLE JUGGERNAUT! DESTROY ALL WHO SEEK TO STOP YOU! LET NO MAN STAND IN YOUR PATH--!
COME TO ME, YOUR MASTER! COME, I COMMAND YOU--
FREE ME NOW, SLAVE OF MY MIND!
FREE ME NOW!
MAX SECURITY
AND FOR REASONS THAT WILL BECOME APPARENT, THE SWAMP THING LISTENS TO THE MADMAN'S THOUGHTS... AND OBEYS.
JUST THEN, FOR THE SAKE OF IRONY--
HOLY HANNAH, WE GOT HERE RIGHT IN TIME!
THAT MAN-- IS THAT WHO I THINK IT IS?
IT'S HIM! SWAMP THING-- AND WITH HIM--
14

--DUNCAN PRAMBLE, MULTI-MAN!*--
YOU! HOW GOOD OF YOU TO COME, CHALLENGERS! HOW GOOD OF YOU TO MAKE MY ESCAPE A TOTAL VICTORY!
MULTI-MAN--WHO DRANK A A STOLEN WIZARD'S FORMULA OF LIQUID LIGHT, GIVING HIM IMMORTALITY--
*LAST SEEN IN CHALLENGERS #81.--JON

--THE ABILITY TO BE REBORN EACH TIME HE DIED, IN A NEW BODY--WITH NEW, ARCANE POWERS!
THE LAST TIME HE DIED--WE THOUGHT HE WAS REBORN AS A NORMAL MAN!

AND WE'VE GOT TO STOP HIM!
YOU MAY TRY, ROCKY DAVIS! YOUR WRESTLER'S STRENGTH WILL BE WORTHLESS--

AND YOU WILL FAIL--OR DIE!
AS YOU CAN SEE, MY LAST TRANSFORMATION DID NOT LEAVE ME POWERLESS!
I'VE GAINED A TALENT FOR TELEPATHY, AND USING THAT TALENT--

AAAH! HE'S--CRUSHING--ME!
"--I'VE TAKEN COMPLETE CONTROL OVER THIS MONSTER I DISCOVERED WHILE MENTALLY 'OBSERVING' YOUR RECENT EXPLOITS!
"HE IS MINE TO COMMAND! TOGETHER, WE WILL RULE MANKIND!"

GUYS, YOU'VE GOTTA DO SOMETHING! HE'LL KILL ROCKY-- AND THE BIG LUMP REMINDS ME OF MY BROTHER CLEVE!
YOU CAN'T LET HIM DIE-- I'LL HAUNT YOU FOREVER!
IT'S NO USE, ACE! SWAMP THING DOESN'T EVEN FEEL US!
IF ONLY THERE WERE SOME WAY TO SHORT CIRCUIT THE TELEPATHIC LINK BETWEEN PRAMBLE AND DOCTOR HOLLAND-- LIKE YOU'D SHORT A COMPUTER CIRCUIT!
THAT'S ROCKY'S ONLY CHANCE--
AND IT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
FOR YOU PHYSICAL GUYS, MAYBE IT IS! BUT FOR A DEADMAN--?
I'VE HAD MY SHOT AT LIFE! SO HERE GOES NOTHING--
CAN HE?
UHH?
--'CAUSE A GHOST CAN'T DIE--
SHAA
ROOM

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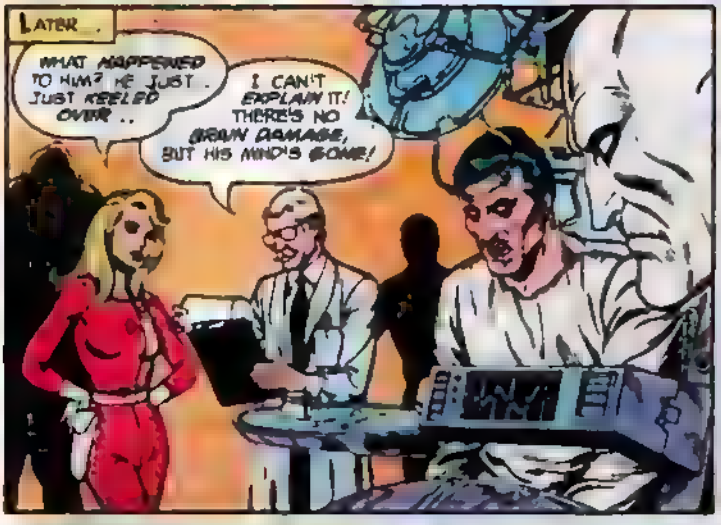
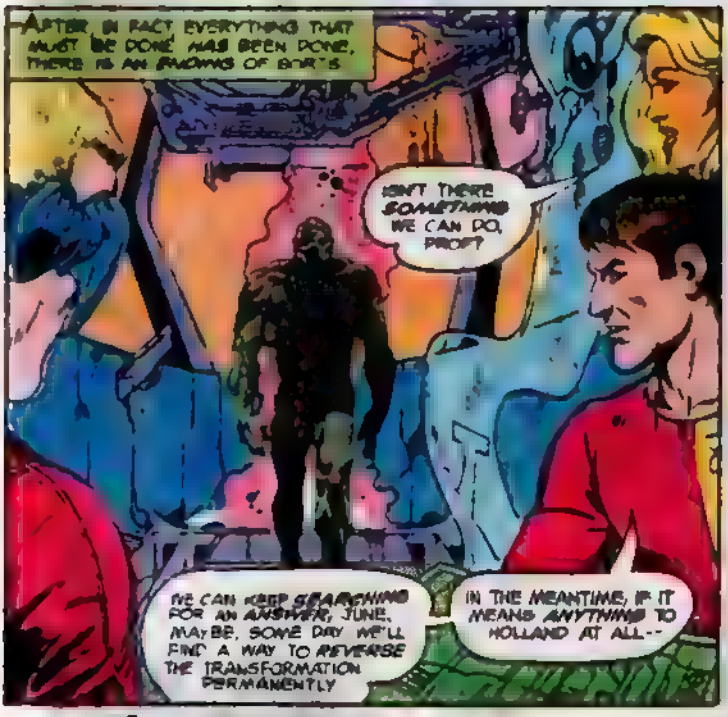
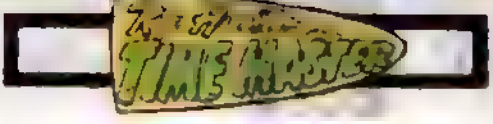


AFTERWARD AFTER DUNCAN FRANKLE HAS BEEN SAFELY TUCKED AWAY IN A HOSPITAL WARD, AFTER THE CHALLENGER'S CREW HAS RETURNED TO COLORADO, AFTER SWAMP THING HAS BEEN TESTED IN THE CHALLENGER LAB-


AFTER, IN FACT, EVERYTHING THAT MUST BE DONE HAS BEEN DONE, THERE IS AN END TO ALL OF IT'S
ISN'T THERE SOMETHING WE CAN DO, PROF?
WE CAN KEEP SEARCHING FOR AN ANSWER, JUNE. MAYBE, SOME DAY WE'LL FIND A WAY TO REVERSE THE TRANSFORMATION PERMANENTLY
IN THE MEANTIME, IF IT MEANS ANYTHING TO HOLLAND AT ALL--

"--HE CAN CONSIDER CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN HIS HOME."
IT MEANS SOMETHING, PROFESSOR HALSEY. IT MEANS A GREAT DEAL.
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HIS EXISTENCE, THE SWAMP THING IS NO LONGER ALONE.

COMING NEXT ISSUE: REINTRODUCING ONE OF THE GREAT HEROES OF YESTERYEAR--



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12p
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
FIRE THE WEAPON, JUNE! FIRE OR WE'LL ALL BE CRUSHED!
I--I CAN'T!
EAT AT MAMA APONTES
BUCKLER & ABEL
Guest Starring DEADMAN AND SWAMP THING

SURVIVING A CATACLYSMIC AIRCRAFT CRASH THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN FATAL--FOUR ADVENTURERS NOW CONSIDER THEMSELVES LIVING ON BORROWED TIME--FOUR MEN, JOINED BY A WOMAN IN LOVE WITH DANGER, NOW FACE ANY RISK--ANY PERIL--ANY FOE! TOGETHER THEY ARE--
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
Guest Starring DEADMAN and SWAMP THING
AN ANGRY WORD, A SHOUTED ACCUSATION, A SCUFFLE THAT ESCALATES INTO UNREASONING VIOLENCE; AND AS SUDDENLY AS THAT, A FRIENDSHIP ENDS...
STUFF IT, ROCKY!
YOU WANT TO MAKE A PASS AT JUNE, MAKE IT! BUT WE'RE FINISHED, WRESTLER-MAN...
WE'RE THROUGH!
KRAK
THE CREATURE FROM THE END OF TIME!
J-4867
A GERRY CONWAY (WRITER) * KEITH GIFFEN (ARTIST) * JOHN CELARDO (INKER) * JERRY SERPE (COLORIST) * MILT SNAPINN (LETTERER) * JACK C. HARRIS (EDITOR) PRODUCTION.

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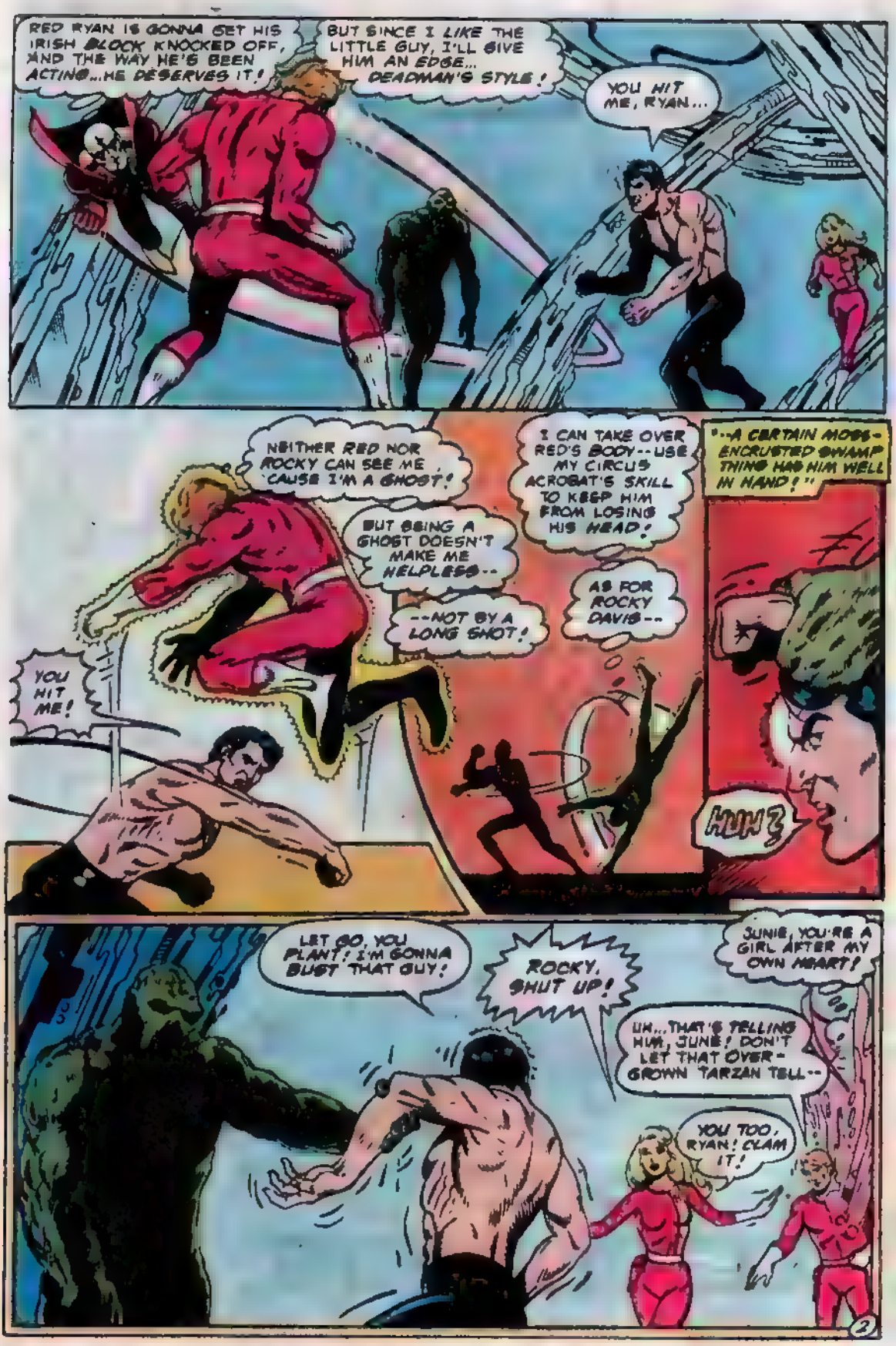
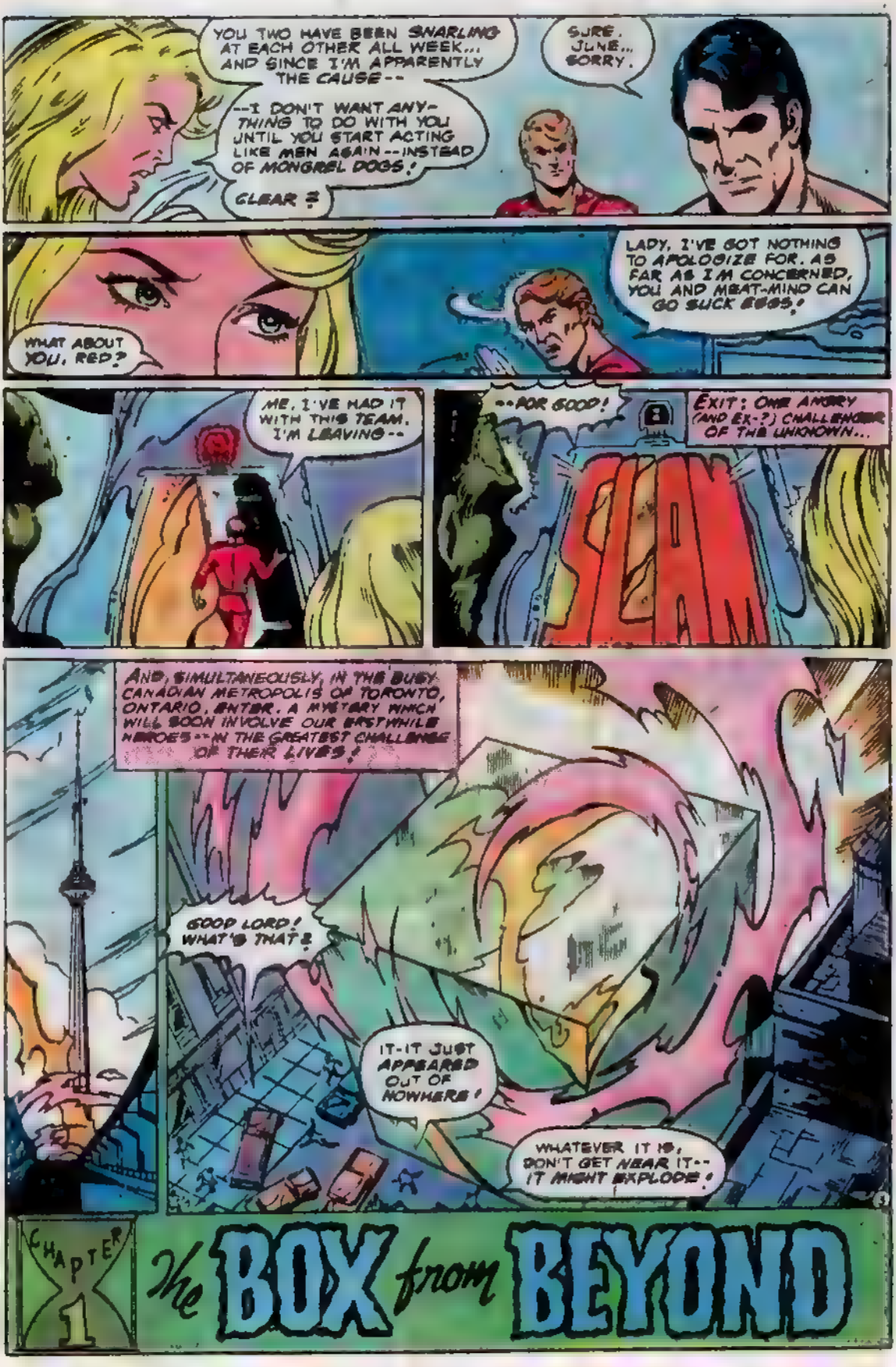
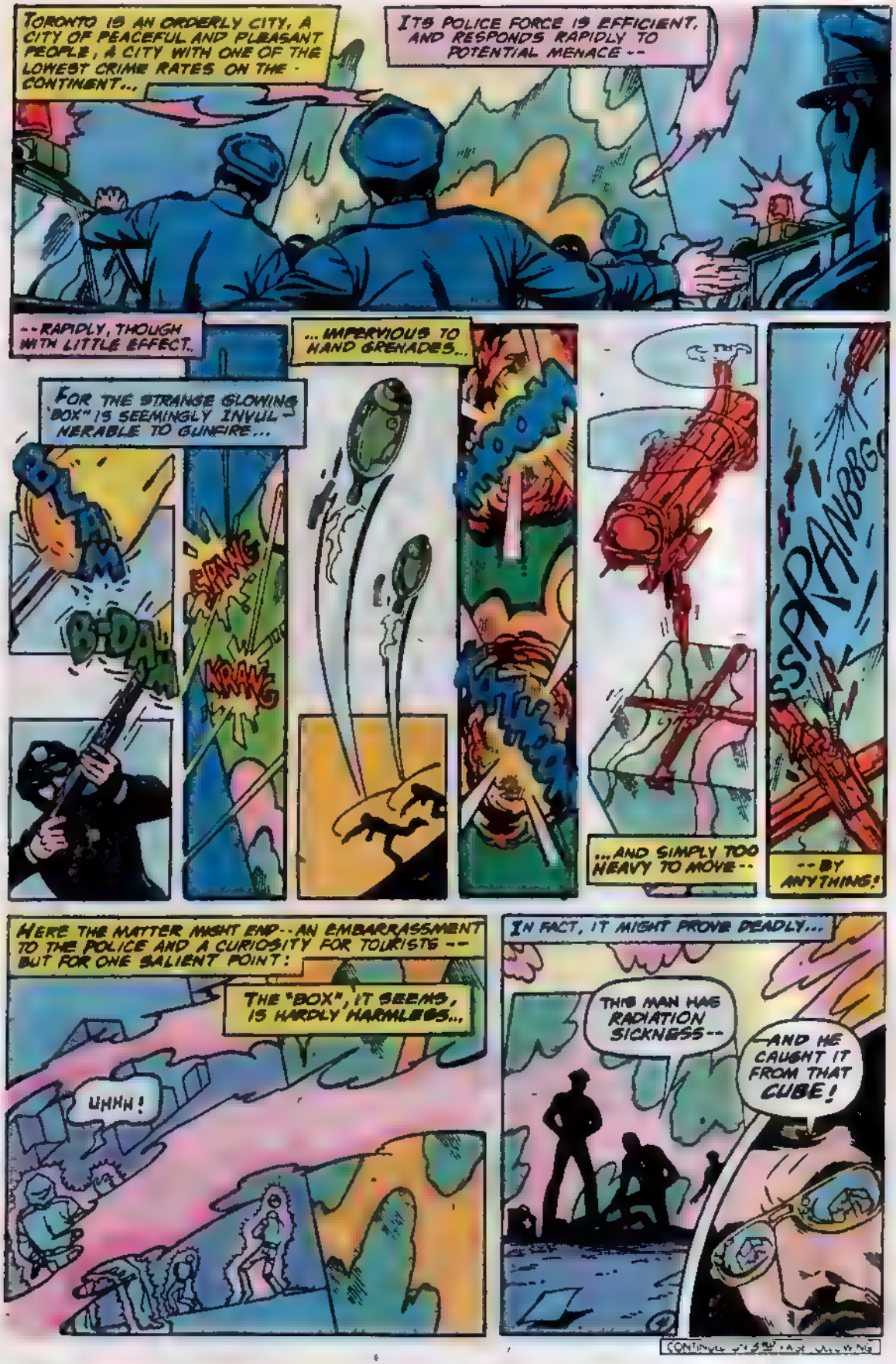

RED RYAN IS GONNA GET HIS IRISH BLOCK KNOCKED OFF, AND THE WAY HE'S BEEN ACTING...HE DESERVES IT!
BUT SINCE I LIKE THE LITTLE GUY, I'LL GIVE HIM AN EDGE... DEADMAN'S STYLE!
YOU HIT ME, RYAN...
NEITHER RED NOR ROCKY CAN SEE ME 'CAUSE I'M A GHOST!
BUT BEING A GHOST DOESN'T MAKE ME HELPLESS--
--NOT BY A LONG SHOT!
I CAN TAKE OVER RED'S BODY--USE MY CIRCUS ACROBAT'S SKILL TO KEEP HIM FROM LOSING HIS HEAD!
AS FOR ROCKY DAVIS--
"--A CERTAIN MOSS-ENCRUSTED SWAMP THING HAD HIM WELL IN HAND!"
YOU HIT ME!
HUH?
LET GO, YOU PLANT! I'M GONNA BUST THAT GUY!
ROCKY, SHUT UP!
JUNIE, YOU'RE A GIRL AFTER MY OWN HEART!
UH...THAT'S TELLING HIM, JUNIE! DON'T LET THAT OVER-GROWN TARZAN TELL--
YOU TOO, RYAN! CLAM IT!


YOU TWO HAVE BEEN SNARLING AT EACH OTHER ALL WEEK... AND SINCE I'M APPARENTLY THE CAUSE--
--I DON'T WANT ANYTHING TO DO WITH YOU UNTIL YOU START ACTING LIKE MEN AGAIN--INSTEAD OF MONGREL DOGS!
CLEAR?
SURE, JUNE... SORRY.
LADY, I'VE GOT NOTHING TO APOLOGIZE FOR. AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, YOU AND MEAT-MIND CAN GO SUCK EGGS!
WHAT ABOUT YOU, RED?
ME, I'VE HAD IT WITH THIS TEAM. I'M LEAVING--
--FOR GOOD!
EXIT: ONE ANGRY (AND EX-?) CHALLENGER OF THE UNKNOWN...
SLAM
AND, SIMULTANEOUSLY, IN THE BUSY CANADIAN METROPOLIS OF TORONTO, ONTARIO, ENTER, A MYSTERY WHICH WILL SOON INVOLVE OUR ERSTWHILE HEROES--IN THE GREATEST CHALLENGE OF THEIR LIVES!
GOOD LORD! WHAT'S THAT?
IT-IT JUST APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE!
WHATEVER IT IS, DON'T GET NEAR IT--IT MIGHT EXPLODE!
CHAPTER 1
The BOX from BEYOND



TORONTO IS AN ORDERLY CITY, A CITY OF PEACEFUL AND PLEASANT PEOPLE, A CITY WITH ONE OF THE LOWEST CRIME RATES ON THE CONTINENT...

ITS POLICE FORCE IS EFFICIENT, AND RESPONDS RAPIDLY TO POTENTIAL MENACE --

--RAPIDLY, THOUGH WITH LITTLE EFFECT.

FOR THE STRANGE GLOWING "BOX" IS SEEMINGLY INVULNERABLE TO GUNFIRE...

BLAM

BI-DAM

SPANG

KRANG

...IMPERVIOUS TO HAND GRENADES...

...AND SIMPLY TOO HEAVY TO MOVE--

SSPRANBBG

--BY ANYTHING!

HERE THE MATTER MIGHT END--AN EMBARRASSMENT TO THE POLICE AND A CURIOSITY FOR TOURISTS -- BUT FOR ONE SALIENT POINT:

THE "BOX", IT SEEMS, IS HARDLY HARMLESS...

UHHH!

IN FACT, IT MIGHT PROVE DEADLY...

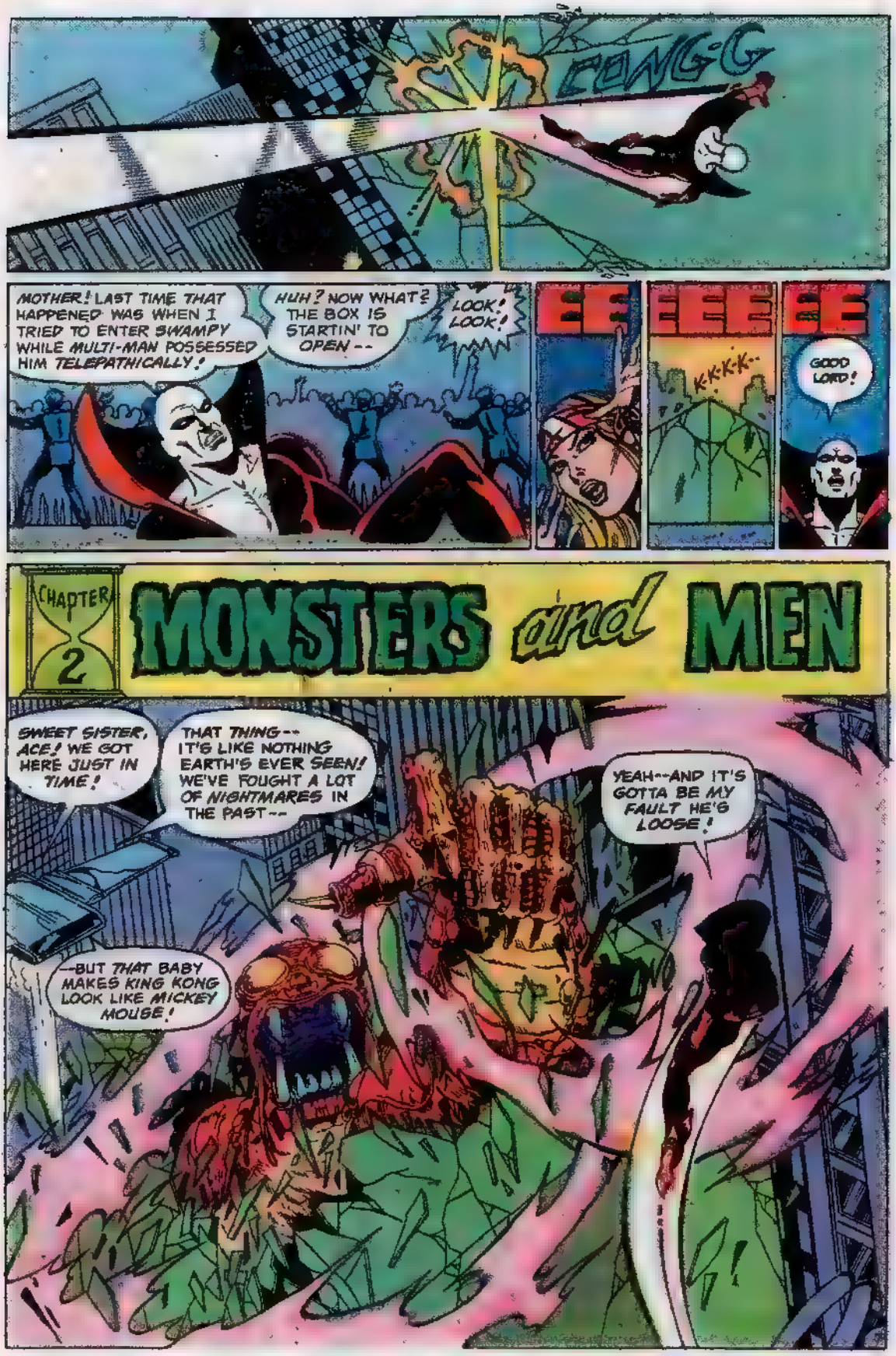
THIS MAN HAS RADIATION SICKNESS--

--AND HE CAUGHT IT FROM THAT CUBE!

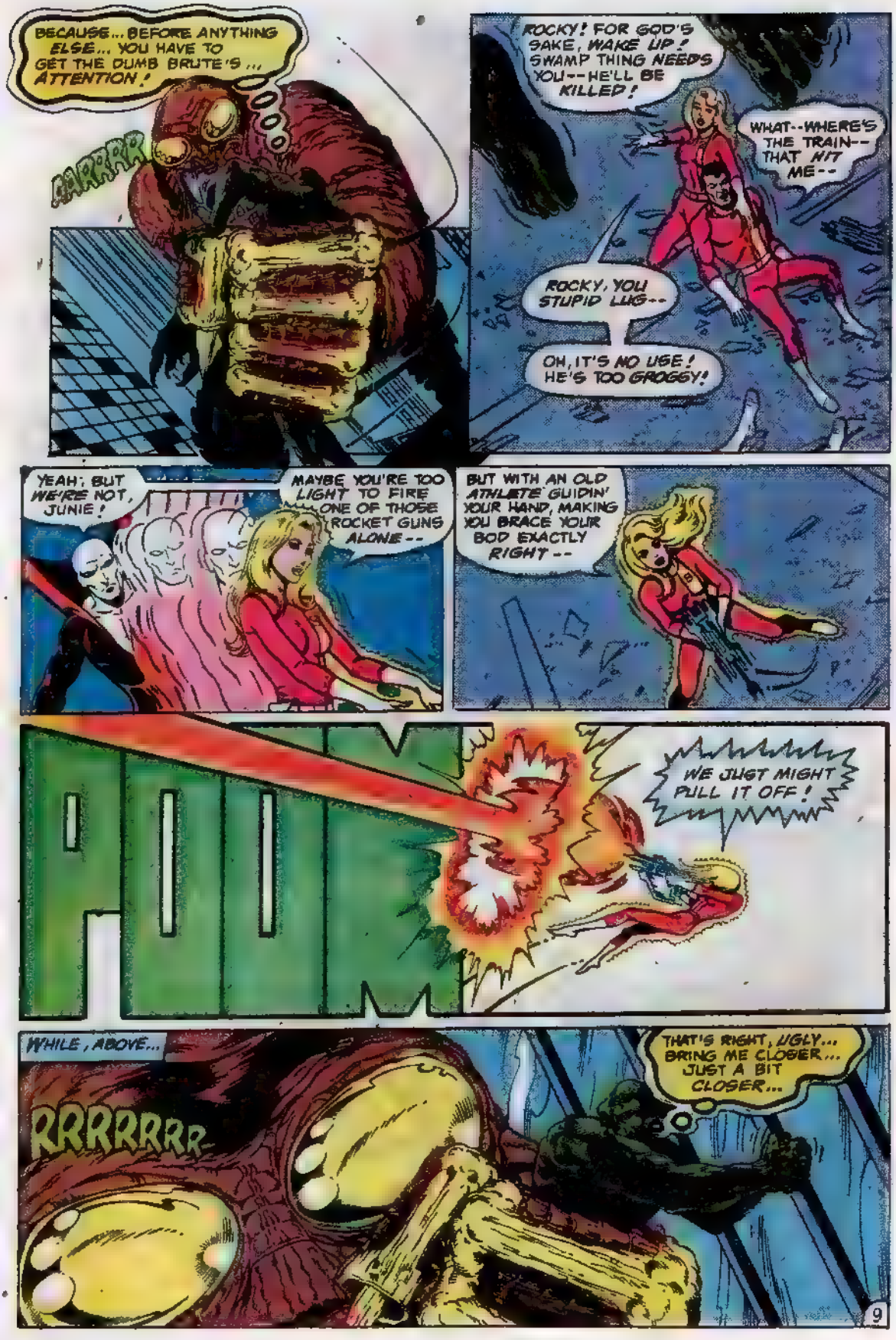
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

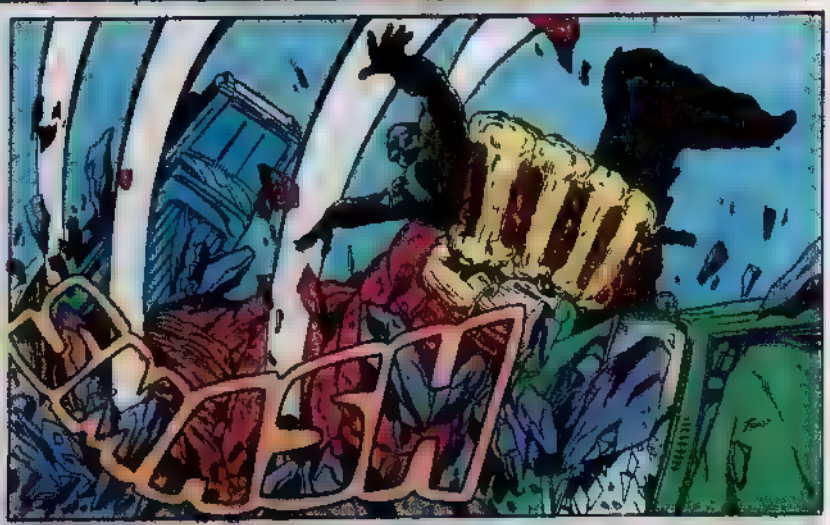
RE-ENTER: THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN...
FRIENDS, I KNOW HOW YOU ALL LOVE A MYSTERY... AND I THINK WE'VE GOT ONE THAT'S A LULU.
I ONLY WISH I COULD GO TO TORONTO WITH YOU--
UNFORTUNATELY, I'LL BE CONFINED TO THIS WHEELCHAIR FOR ANOTHER FEW WEEKS.
WHAT SORT OF "MYSTERY" IS IT, PROF?
DOES IT MATTER, ACE?
I'D GO SNOWSHOEING UP THE AMAZON JUST FOR A CHANGE OF SCENE!
HIS VOICE STILL WEAK FROM THE FUNGUS* WHICH RAVAGED HIS BODY, PROF EXPLAINS THE CANADIAN CRISIS; THEN...
SO THE CANADIANS CONTACTED US! THEIR ARMY CAN'T HANDLE IT!
YOU WANT TO GIVE IT A SHOT, CHALLENGERS?
* SEE GOTU #83 - JCH!
IT'S OUR MEAT, PROF.
LET'S MOVE!
WITH A ROAR, THE CHALLENGERS' CUSTOM-BUILT SST SPRINGS SKYWARD OVER THE COLORADO HILLS...
YET, AS FAST AS THE SUPER-SONIC TRANSPORT CAN FLY, IT CAN'T KEEP PACE WITH A DEADMAN--
THEY DON'T EVEN KNOW THEY'VE GOT ME FOR A PARTNER, SO WHY SHOULD I LAG AROUND FOR THEM?
5

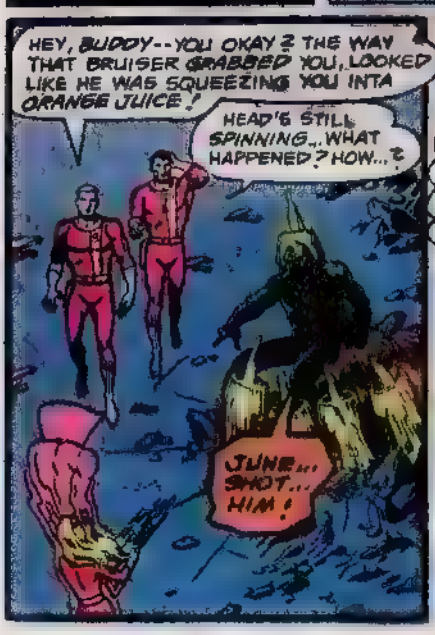
RAMA KUSHNA LETS ME REMAIN ON EARTH SO I CAN STRIKE A "BALANCE" BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL...SO HERE'S WHERE I DO SOME STRIKING...
...ON MY OWN!
DOCTOR HOLLAND, IF YOU'D RATHER STAY IN THE JET, WE'LL UNDERSTAND.
ALONE...WITH A MONSTER IN MY MIRROR? NO THANKS, I'LL TAKE MY CHANCES WITH THE CHALLENGERS
EVEN A SWAMP THING...NEEDS TO BELONG...
Y KNOW, I JUST CAN'T FIGURE WHAT MADE RED SO MAD, ACE.
THINK ABOUT IT, ROCKY. EVEN BEFORE JUNE AND I BROKE UP, I KNEW HOW RED FELT ABOUT HER! I GUESS SEEING HER WITH YOU WAS JUST TOO MUCH FOR HIM.
HUH? HEY, ACE--ALL THIS PILOTIN' MUST'VE SCRAMBLED YOUR BRAINS!
JUNE AND I, WE'RE JUST FRIENDS!
UH-HUH. THAT'S WHAT YOU THINK, DAVIS. JUNE MAY HAVE OTHER IDEAS.
C'MON, YOU'RE KIDDING!
AM I?
JUNE AND...ME?
MEANWHILE, IN TORONTO WHERE A CONTINENT-SPANNING WRAITH MAKES HIS ENTRANCE...
THEY SAY THIS THING'S INVULNERABLE. AND MAYBE IT IS--TO BULLETS!
BUT A DEADMAN IS SOMETHING ELSE! LET'S SEE THIS BABY KEEP ME OUT--

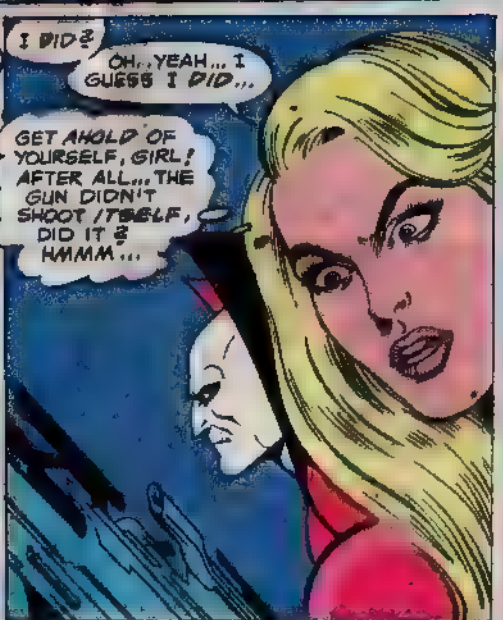

RAWG-G
MOTHER! LAST TIME THAT HAPPENED WAS WHEN I TRIED TO ENTER SWAMPY WHILE MULTI-MAN POSSESSED HIM TELEPATHICALLY!
HUH? NOW WHAT? THE BOX IS STARTIN' TO OPEN--
LOOK! LOOK!
EE
EEE
K-K-K-K--
EE
GOOD LORD!
CHAPTER 2
MONSTERS and MEN
SWEET SISTER, ACE! WE GOT HERE JUST IN TIME!
THAT THING-- IT'S LIKE NOTHING EARTH'S EVER SEEN! WE'VE FOUGHT A LOT OF NIGHTMARES IN THE PAST--
YEAH--AND IT'S GOTTA BE MY FAULT HE'S LOOSE!
--BUT THAT BABY MAKES KING KONG LOOK LIKE MICKEY MOUSE!

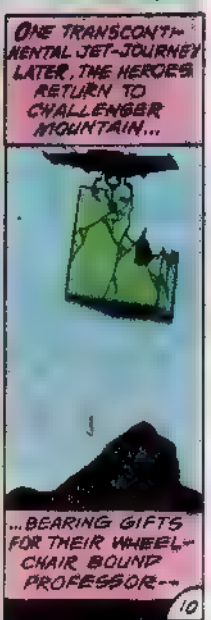
ACE--DO YOU THINK OUR ROCKET-GUNS CAN HANDLE IT?
IF THEY CAN'T, WE'RE ALL IN BIG TROUBLE, ROCKY!
ONE THING'S CERTAIN... IT ISN'T PLANNING ON WINNING A FRIENDLINESS AWARD!
CRASH
POOM!
POOM!
UH-OH! I DON'T THINK WE'VE HURT IT, ACE--
--BUT I DO THINK WE'VE MADE IT MAD!
GUNS DON'T WORK... SO I'LL TRY SOME-THING MORE DIRECT...!
DEAR LORD! I NEVER REALIZED HOW STRONG SWAMP THING MUST BE!
THAT POLICE CAR MUST WEIGH TWO TONS--AND HE'S PLUCKING IT UP LIKE A MATCHBOX TOY!
THOOM
THERE'S AN OLD FARMER'S SAYING.
WHY DID THE FARMER... HIT HIS MULE WITH A TWO-BY-FOUR...?


BECAUSE... BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE... YOU HAVE TO GET THE DUMB BRUTE'S ... ATTENTION!
GRRRR
ROCKY! FOR GOD'S SAKE, WAKE UP! SWAMP THING NEEDS YOU--HE'LL BE KILLED!
WHAT--WHERE'S THE TRAIN--THAT HIT ME--
ROCKY, YOU STUPID LUG--
OH, IT'S NO USE! HE'S TOO GROGGY!
YEAH; BUT WE'RE NOT, JUNIE!
MAYBE YOU'RE TOO LIGHT TO FIRE ONE OF THOSE ROCKET GUNS ALONE--
BUT WITH AN OLD ATHLETE GUIDIN' YOUR HAND, MAKING YOU BRACE YOUR BOD EXACTLY RIGHT--
KOOM
WE JUST MIGHT PULL IT OFF!
WHILE, ABOVE...
RRRRRRR
THAT'S RIGHT, UGLY... BRING ME CLOSER... JUST A BIT CLOSER...




HEY, BUDDY--YOU OKAY? THE WAY THAT BRUISER GRABBED YOU, LOOKED LIKE HE WAS SQUEEZING YOU INTA ORANGE JUICE!
HEAD'S STILL SPINNING...WHAT HAPPENED? HOW...?
JUNE... SHOT... HIM!




ONE TRANSCONTINENTAL JET-JOURNEY LATER, THE HEROES RETURN TO CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN...
...BEARING GIFTS FOR THEIR WHEELCHAIR BOUND PROFESSOR--
10

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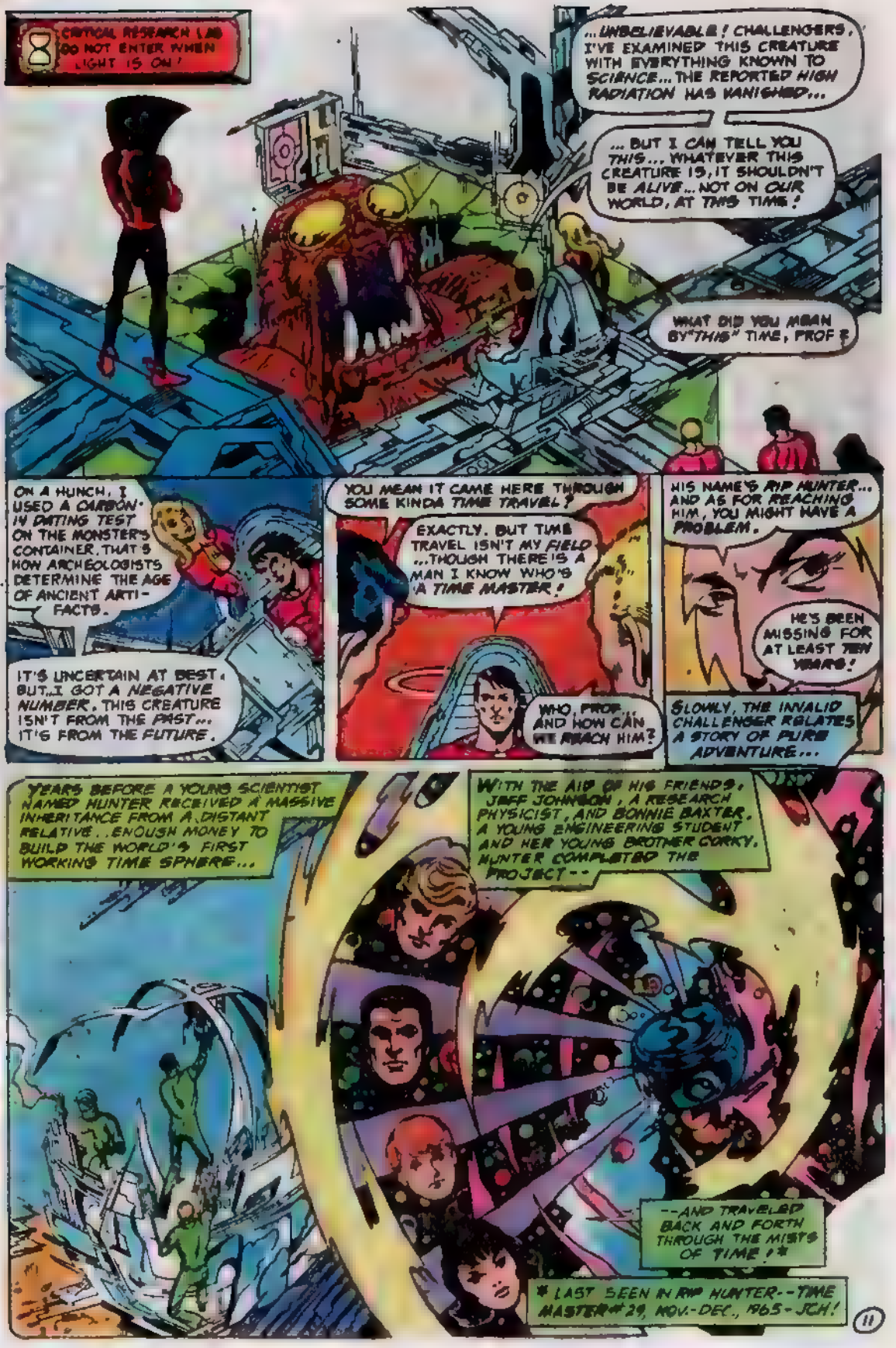
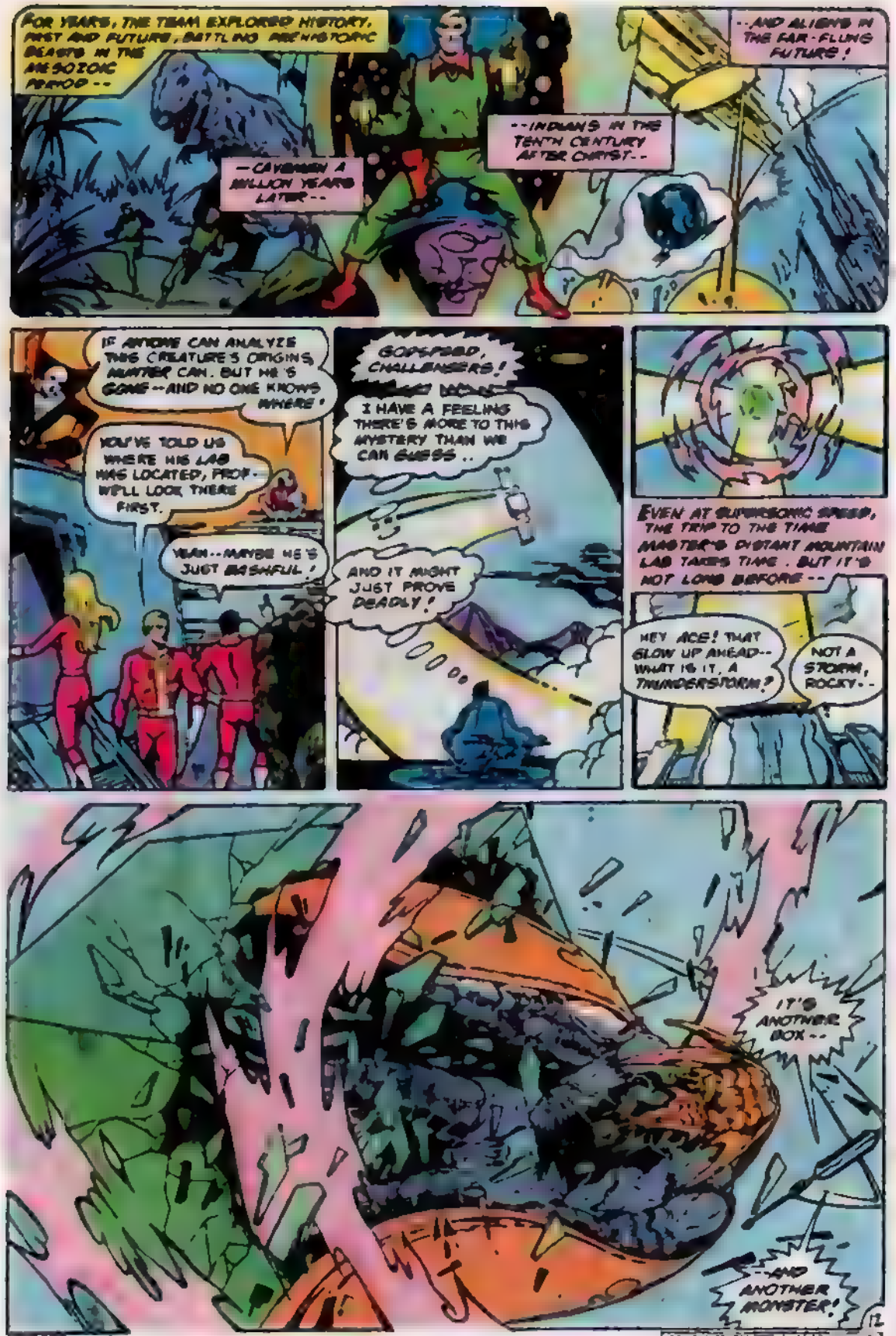

CRITICAL RESEARCH LAB DO NOT ENTER WHEN LIGHT IS ON!
...UNBELIEVABLE! CHALLENGERS, I'VE EXAMINED THIS CREATURE WITH EVERYTHING KNOWN TO SCIENCE... THE REPORTED HIGH RADIATION HAS VANISHED...
...BUT I CAN TELL YOU THIS... WHATEVER THIS CREATURE IS, IT SHOULDN'T BE ALIVE... NOT ON OUR WORLD, AT THIS TIME!
WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY "THIS" TIME, PROF?
ON A HUNCH, I USED A CARBON-14 DATING TEST ON THE MONSTER'S CONTAINER. THAT'S HOW ARCHEOLOGISTS DETERMINE THE AGE OF ANCIENT ARTIFACTS.
IT'S UNCERTAIN AT BEST, BUT...I GOT A NEGATIVE NUMBER. THIS CREATURE ISN'T FROM THE PAST... IT'S FROM THE FUTURE.
YOU MEAN IT CAME HERE THROUGH SOME KINDA TIME TRAVEL?
EXACTLY. BUT TIME TRAVEL ISN'T MY FIELD ...THOUGH THERE'S A MAN I KNOW WHO'S A TIME MASTER!
WHO, PROF, AND HOW CAN WE REACH HIM?
HIS NAME'S RIP HUNTER... AND AS FOR REACHING HIM, YOU MIGHT HAVE A PROBLEM.
HE'S BEEN MISSING FOR AT LEAST TEN YEARS!
SLOWLY, THE INVALID CHALLENGER RELATES A STORY OF PURE ADVENTURE...
YEARS BEFORE A YOUNG SCIENTIST NAMED HUNTER RECEIVED A MASSIVE INHERITANCE FROM A DISTANT RELATIVE...ENOUGH MONEY TO BUILD THE WORLD'S FIRST WORKING TIME SPHERE...
WITH THE AID OF HIS FRIENDS, JEFF JOHNSON, A RESEARCH PHYSICIST, AND BONNIE BAXTER, A YOUNG ENGINEERING STUDENT AND HER YOUNG BROTHER CORKY, HUNTER COMPLETED THE PROJECT--
--AND TRAVELED BACK AND FORTH THROUGH THE MISTS OF TIME!*
* LAST SEEN IN RIP HUNTER--TIME MASTER #29, NOV.-DEC., 1965-JCH!
11


FOR YEARS, THE TEAM EXPLORED HISTORY, PAST AND FUTURE, BATTLING PREHISTORIC BEASTS IN THE MESOZOIC PERIOD --
--CAVEMEN A MILLION YEARS LATER--
--INDIANS IN THE TENTH CENTURY AFTER CHRIST--
--AND ALIENS IN THE FAR-FLUNG FUTURE!
IF ANYONE CAN ANALYZE THIS CREATURE'S ORIGINS, MATTER CAN. BUT HE'S GONE--AND NO ONE KNOWS WHERE!
YOU'VE TOLD US WHERE HIS LAB WAS LOCATED, PROF--WE'LL LOOK THERE FIRST.
YEAH--MAYBE HE'S JUST BASHFUL!
GOOSHOOD, CHALLENGERS!
I HAVE A FEELING THERE'S MORE TO THIS MYSTERY THAN WE CAN GUESS..
AND IT MIGHT JUST PROVE DEADLY!
EVEN AT SUPERSONIC SPEED, THE TRIP TO THE TIME MASTER'S DISTANT MOUNTAIN LAB TAKES TIME. BUT IT'S NOT LONG BEFORE--
HEY ACE! THAT GLOW UP AHEAD--WHAT IS IT, A THUNDERSTORM?
NOT A STORM, ROCKY--
IT'S ANOTHER BOX--
--AND ANOTHER MONSTER!

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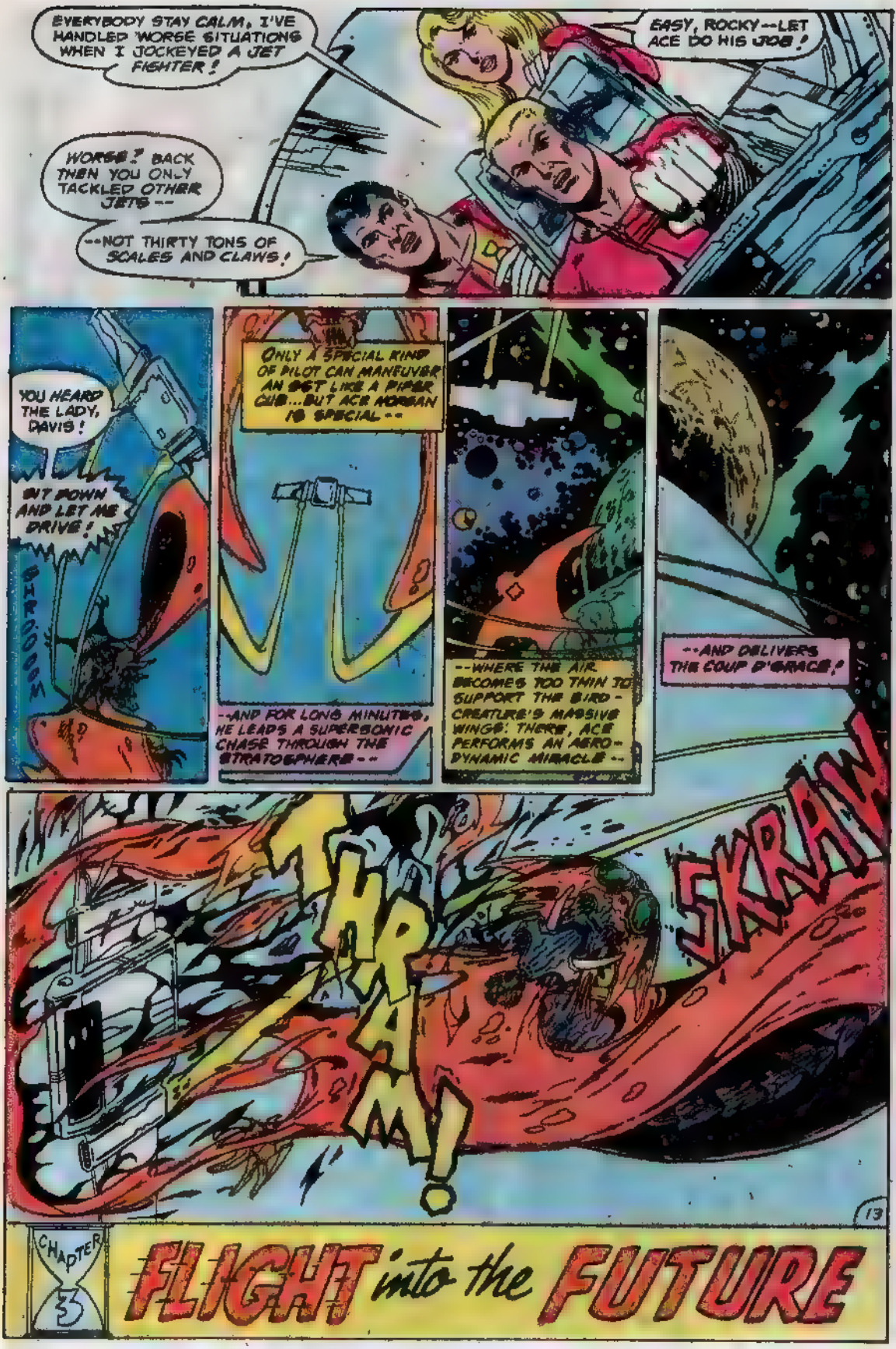
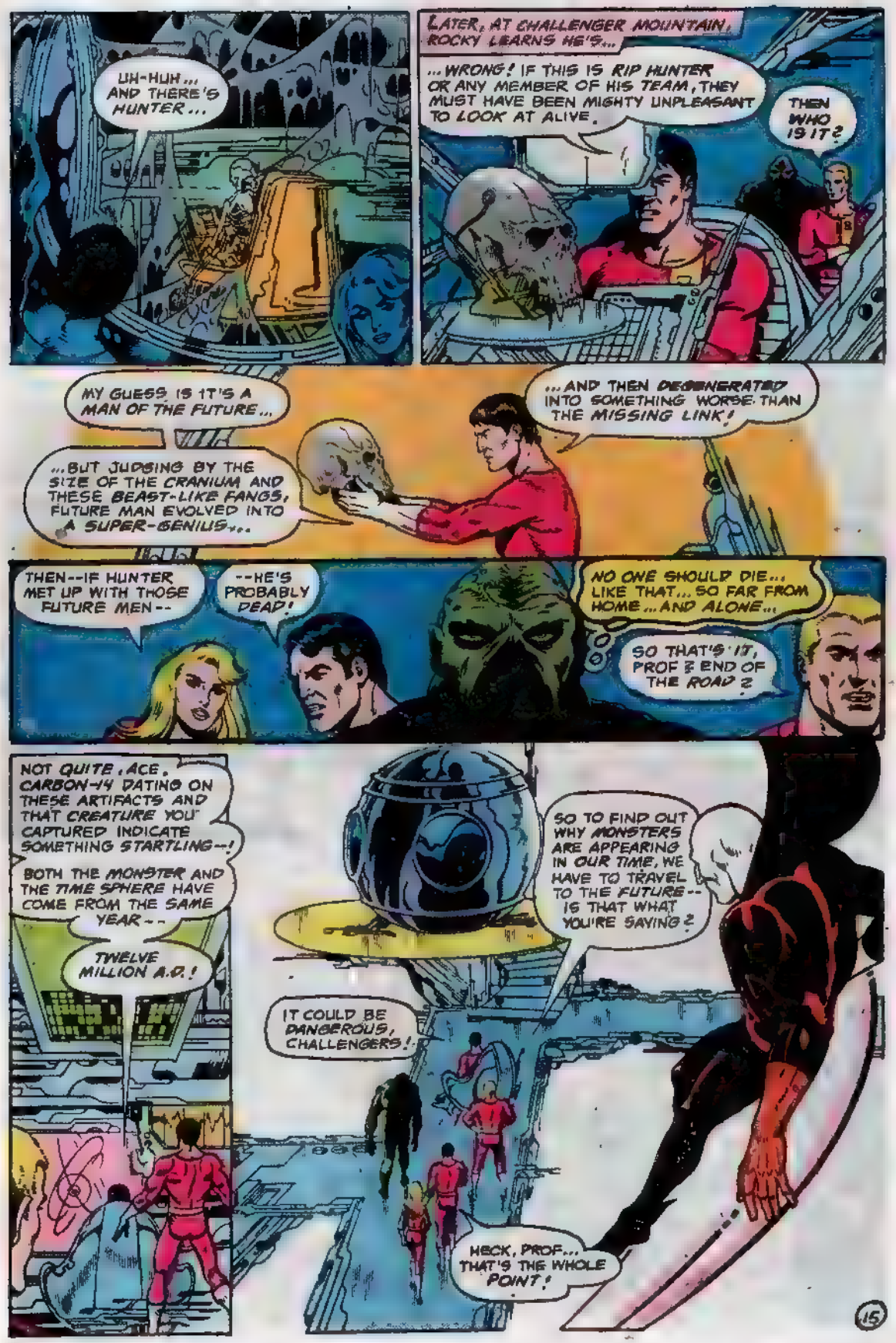
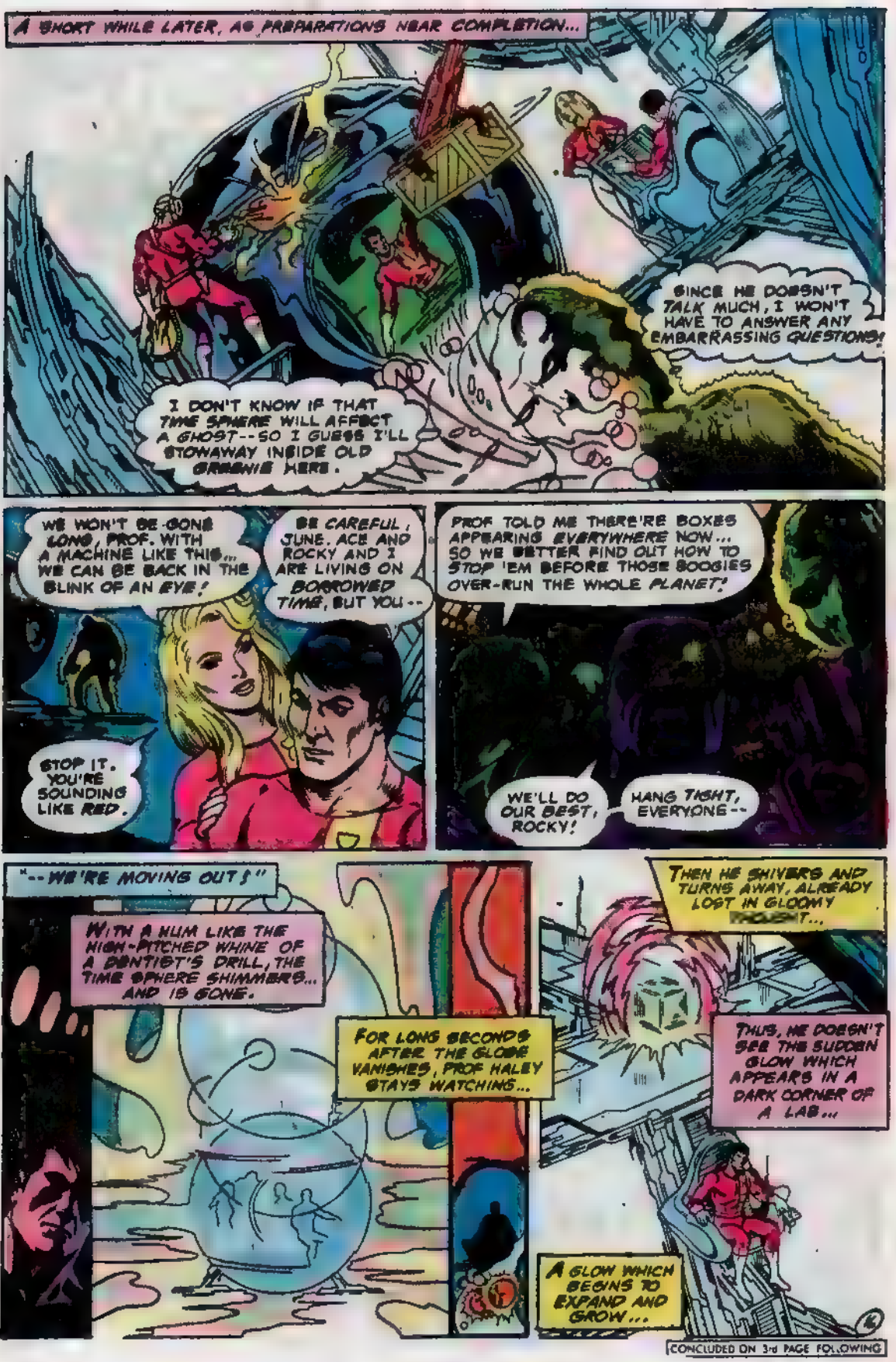

EVERYBODY STAY CALM, I'VE HANDLED WORSE SITUATIONS WHEN I JOCKEYED A JET FIGHTER!
EASY, ROCKY--LET ACE DO HIS JOB!
WORSE? BACK THEN YOU ONLY TACKLED OTHER JETS--
--NOT THIRTY TONS OF SCALES AND CLAWS!
YOU HEARD THE LADY, DAVIS!
SHUT DOWN AND LET ME DRIVE!
SHROOOM
ONLY A SPECIAL KIND OF PILOT CAN MANEUVER AN OBJECT LIKE A PIPER CUB...BUT ACE MORGAN IS SPECIAL--
--AND FOR LONG MINUTES, HE LEADS A SUPERSONIC CHASE THROUGH THE STRATOSPHERE--
--WHERE THE AIR BECOMES TOO THIN TO SUPPORT THE BIRD-CREATURE'S MASSIVE WINGS: THERE, ACE PERFORMS AN AERODYNAMIC MIRACLE--
--AND DELIVERS THE COUP D'GRACE!
SKRAW
THRAM!
13
CHAPTER 3
FLIGHT into the FUTURE

BROTHER MORGAN, DON'T YOU EVER DO SOMETHING LIKE THAT AGAIN!
WHAT'S THE MATTER, JUNE? IT WORKED, DIDN'T IT?
DAMN RIGHT IT WORKED -- AND ALMOST SCARED ME TO DEATH!
YOU? WHAT ABOUT ME? I THOUGHT IT WAS SPLAT CITY!
FOLKS, YOU'VE GOT TO HAVE FAITH, RIGHT, SWAMP THING?
FORGET I ASKED...
SHORTLY...
...PROF WASN'T KIDDING. NOBODY'S BEEN IN THIS PLACE FOR YEARS. DUST MUST BE HALF A FOOT THICK... MINIMUM.
LET'S NOT GET DISCOURAGED, ROCKY. HUNTER MAY BE GONE, BUT IF HE'S LIKE OTHER SCIENTISTS I'VE KNOWN, HE MIGHT HAVE LEFT NOTES.
CHECK EVERYTHING.
STRANGE... DUST AND DEAD MACHINERY... EXCEPT FOR THIS...
WHAT THE --? HOLLAND, YOU IDIOT! DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING! I CAN'T BE HURT -- BUT IF THAT THING EXPLODES, YOU'LL ALL BE --
HUH?
PHOOM
ROCKY -- ACE -- APPEARING OUT OF NOWHERE --
IS THAT -- HUNTER'S TIME SPHERE?!


UH-HUH... AND THERE'S HUNTER...
LATER, AT CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN, ROCKY LEARNS HE'S...
...WRONG! IF THIS IS RIP HUNTER OR ANY MEMBER OF HIS TEAM, THEY MUST HAVE BEEN MIGHTY UNPLEASANT TO LOOK AT ALIVE.
THEN WHO IS IT?
MY GUESS IS IT'S A MAN OF THE FUTURE...
...BUT JUDGING BY THE SIZE OF THE CRANIUM AND THESE BEAST-LIKE FANGS, FUTURE MAN EVOLVED INTO A SUPER-GENIUS...
...AND THEN DEGENERATED INTO SOMETHING WORSE THAN THE MISSING LINK!
THEN--IF HUNTER MET UP WITH THOSE FUTURE MEN--
--HE'S PROBABLY DEAD!
NO ONE SHOULD DIE... LIKE THAT... SO FAR FROM HOME... AND ALONE...
SO THAT'S IT, PROF? END OF THE ROAD?
NOT QUITE, ACE. CARBON-14 DATING ON THESE ARTIFACTS AND THAT CREATURE YOU CAPTURED INDICATE SOMETHING STARTLING--!
BOTH THE MONSTER AND THE TIME SPHERE HAVE COME FROM THE SAME YEAR--
TWELVE MILLION A.D.!
SO TO FIND OUT WHY MONSTERS ARE APPEARING IN OUR TIME, WE HAVE TO TRAVEL TO THE FUTURE-- IS THAT WHAT YOU'RE SAYING?
IT COULD BE DANGEROUS, CHALLENGERS!
HECK, PROF... THAT'S THE WHOLE POINT!


A SHORT WHILE LATER, AS PREPARATIONS NEAR COMPLETION...
SINCE HE DOESN'T TALK MUCH, I WON'T HAVE TO ANSWER ANY EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS!
I DON'T KNOW IF THAT TIME SPHERE WILL AFFECT A GHOST--SO I GUESS I'LL STOWAWAY INSIDE OLD GRISHNIE HERE.
WE WON'T BE GONE LONG, PROF. WITH A MACHINE LIKE THIS... WE CAN BE BACK IN THE BLINK OF AN EYE!
BE CAREFUL, JUNE. ACE AND ROCKY AND I ARE LIVING ON BORROWED TIME, BUT YOU--
STOP IT. YOU'RE SOUNDING LIKE RED.
PROF TOLD ME THERE'RE BOXES APPEARING EVERYWHERE NOW... SO WE BETTER FIND OUT HOW TO STOP 'EM BEFORE THOSE BOOGIES OVER-RUN THE WHOLE PLANET!
WE'LL DO OUR BEST, ROCKY!
HANG TIGHT, EVERYONE--
"--WE'RE MOVING OUT!"
WITH A HUM LIKE THE HIGH-PITCHED WHINE OF A DENTIST'S DRILL, THE TIME SPHERE SHIMMERS... AND IS GONE.
FOR LONG SECONDS AFTER THE GLOBE VANISHES, PROF HALEY STAYS WATCHING...
THEN HE SHIVERS AND TURNS AWAY, ALREADY LOST IN GLOOMY THOUGHT...
THUS, HE DOESN'T SEE THE SUDDEN GLOW WHICH APPEARS IN A DARK CORNER OF A LAB...
A GLOW WHICH BEGINS TO EXPAND AND GROW...

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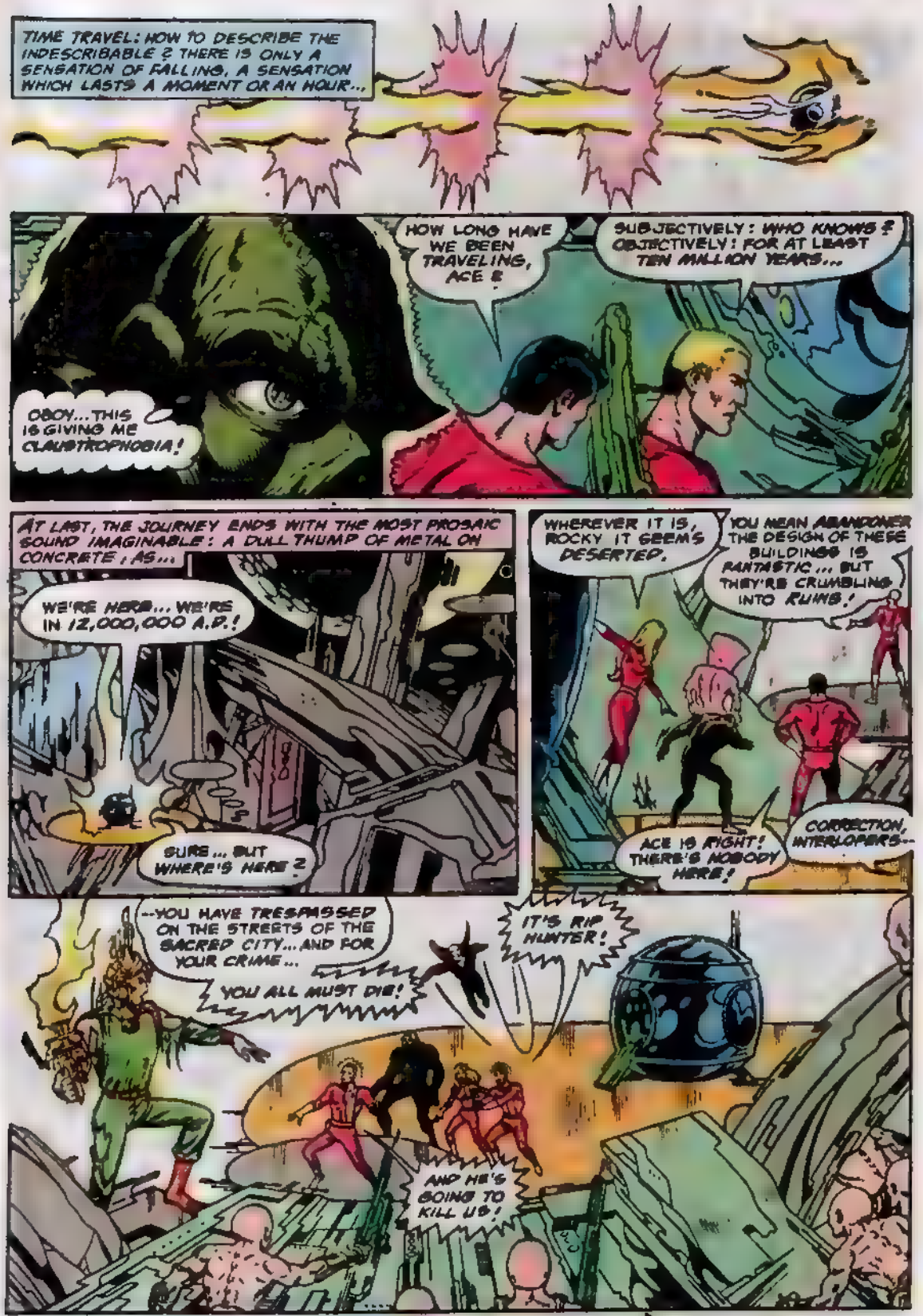
TIME TRAVEL: HOW TO DESCRIBE THE INDESCRIBABLE? THERE IS ONLY A SENSATION OF FALLING, A SENSATION WHICH LASTS A MOMENT OR AN HOUR...
OBOY... THIS IS GIVING ME CLAUSTROPHOBIA!
HOW LONG HAVE WE BEEN TRAVELING, ACE?
SUBJECTIVELY: WHO KNOWS? OBJECTIVELY: FOR AT LEAST TEN MILLION YEARS...
AT LAST, THE JOURNEY ENDS WITH THE MOST PROSAIC SOUND IMAGINABLE: A DULL THUMP OF METAL ON CONCRETE; AS...
WE'RE HERE... WE'RE IN 12,000,000 A.D.!
SURE... BUT WHERE'S HERE?
WHEREVER IT IS, ROCKY IT SEEMS DESERTED.
YOU MEAN ABANDONED! THE DESIGN OF THESE BUILDINGS IS FANTASTIC... BUT THEY'RE CRUMBLING INTO RUINS!
ACE IS RIGHT! THERE'S NOBODY HERE!
CORRECTION, INTERLOPERS--
--YOU HAVE TRESPASSED ON THE STREETS OF THE SACRED CITY... AND FOR YOUR CRIME...
YOU ALL MUST DIE!
IT'S RIP HUNTER!
AND HE'S GOING TO KILL US!

NEXT ISSUE: WAR AT TIME'S END

ON SALE THE 4TH WEEK IN JANUARY

DC
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
NO. 80 MAY 30433
35¢
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
IS THIS THE FUTURE?
SMASHING THROUGH THE TIME BARRIER --- AHEAD 12 MILLION YEARS --- WILL THE CHALLENGERS SURVIVE THE WAR AT TIME'S END?
BUCKLER & GIACOIA

SURVIVING A CATACLYSMIC AIRCRARY CRASH THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN FATAL FOUR ADVENTURERS NOW CONSIDER THEMSELVES LIVING ON BORROWED TIME -- FOUR MEN JOINED BY A WOMAN IN LOVE WITH DANGER NOW FACE ANY RISK ANY PERIL -- ANY FOE! TOGETHER THEY ARE -
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
Guest Starring DEADMAN and SWAMP THING
HIS NAME IS PROF ALEX AND HE'S A CHALLENGER SINCE A BATTLE IN PERU FROM PENNSYLVANIA. HE'S BEEN WHEELCHAIR BOUND AND HE HATES
HE LONGED FOR ACTION AND ADVENTURE SHARED WITH HIS FELLOW CHALLENGERS BUT HE NEVER HOPED FOR THIS
FOR FURTHER BACKGROUND KEEP READING THINGS ARE ABOUT TO MOVE !
RRRAAA
GOOD LORD!
JACK C HARRIS, EDITOR

GERRY CONWAY (WRITER) • KEITH GIFFEN (PENCILS) • JOHN CELARDO (INKS) • GENE FINGELO (COLORS)

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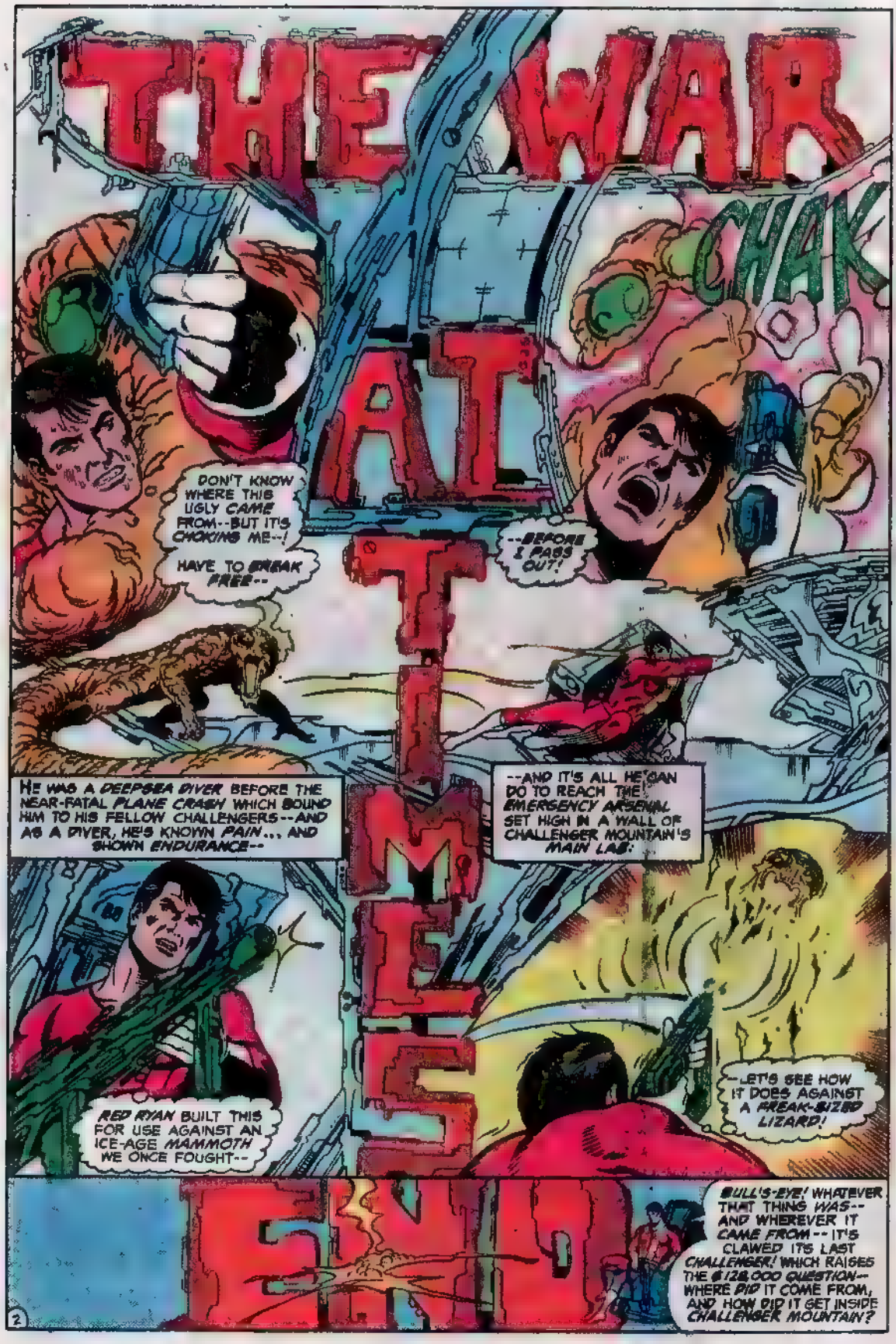
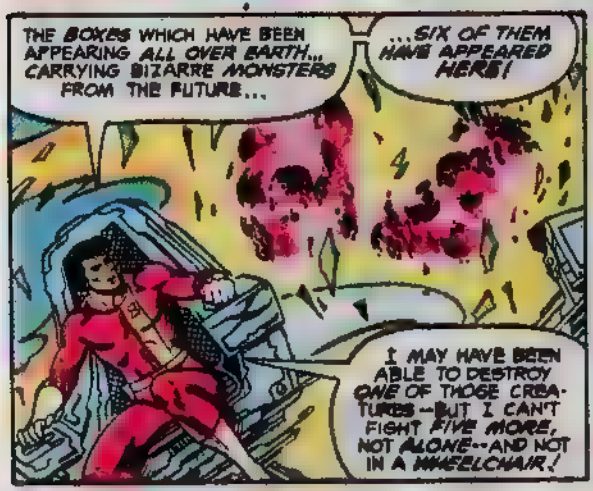
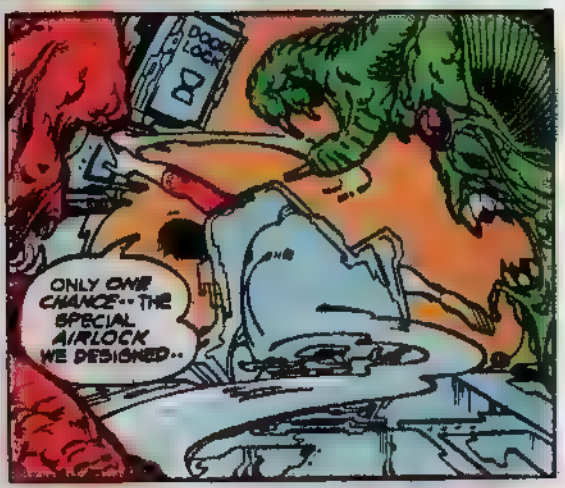
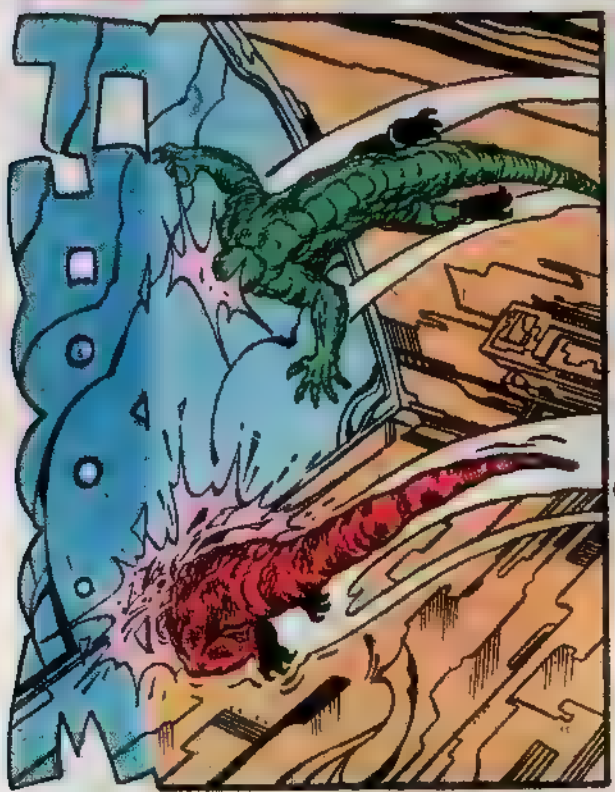
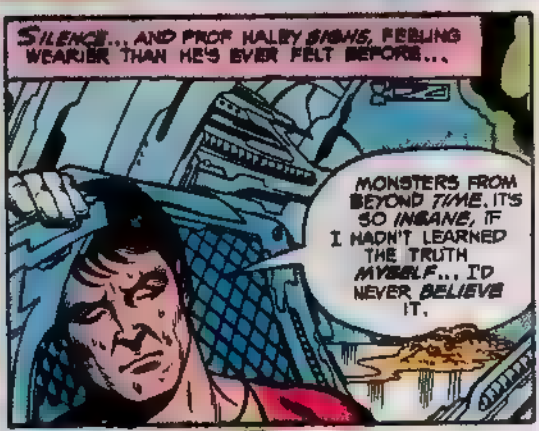
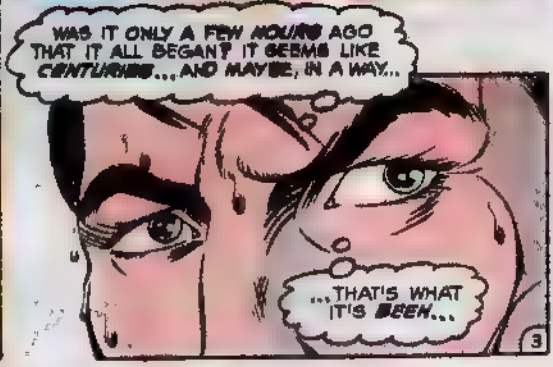

THE WAR AT THE END OF TIME
CHAK
DON'T KNOW WHERE THIS UGLY CAME FROM--BUT IT'S CHOKING ME--!
HAVE TO BREAK FREE--
--BEFORE I PASS OUT!
HE WAS A DEEPSEA DIVER BEFORE THE NEAR-FATAL PLANE CRASH WHICH BOUND HIM TO HIS FELLOW CHALLENGERS--AND AS A DIVER, HE'S KNOWN PAIN... AND SHOWN ENDURANCE--
--AND IT'S ALL HE CAN DO TO REACH THE EMERGENCY ARSENAL SET HIGH IN A WALL OF CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN'S MAIN LAB:
RED RYAN BUILT THIS FOR USE AGAINST AN ICE-AGE MAMMOTH WE ONCE FOUGHT--
--LET'S SEE HOW IT DOES AGAINST A FREAK-SIZED LIZARD!
BULL'S-EYE! WHATEVER THAT THING WAS--AND WHEREVER IT CAME FROM--IT'S CLAWED ITS LAST CHALLENGER! WHICH RAISES THE $128,000 QUESTION--WHERE DID IT COME FROM, AND HOW DID IT GET INSIDE CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN?
2


THE BOXES WHICH HAVE BEEN APPEARING ALL OVER EARTH... CARRYING BIZARRE MONSTERS FROM THE FUTURE...
...SIX OF THEM HAVE APPEARED HERE!
I MAY HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DESTROY ONE OF THOSE CREATURES--BUT I CAN'T FIGHT FIVE MORE, NOT ALONE--AND NOT IN A WHEELCHAIR!

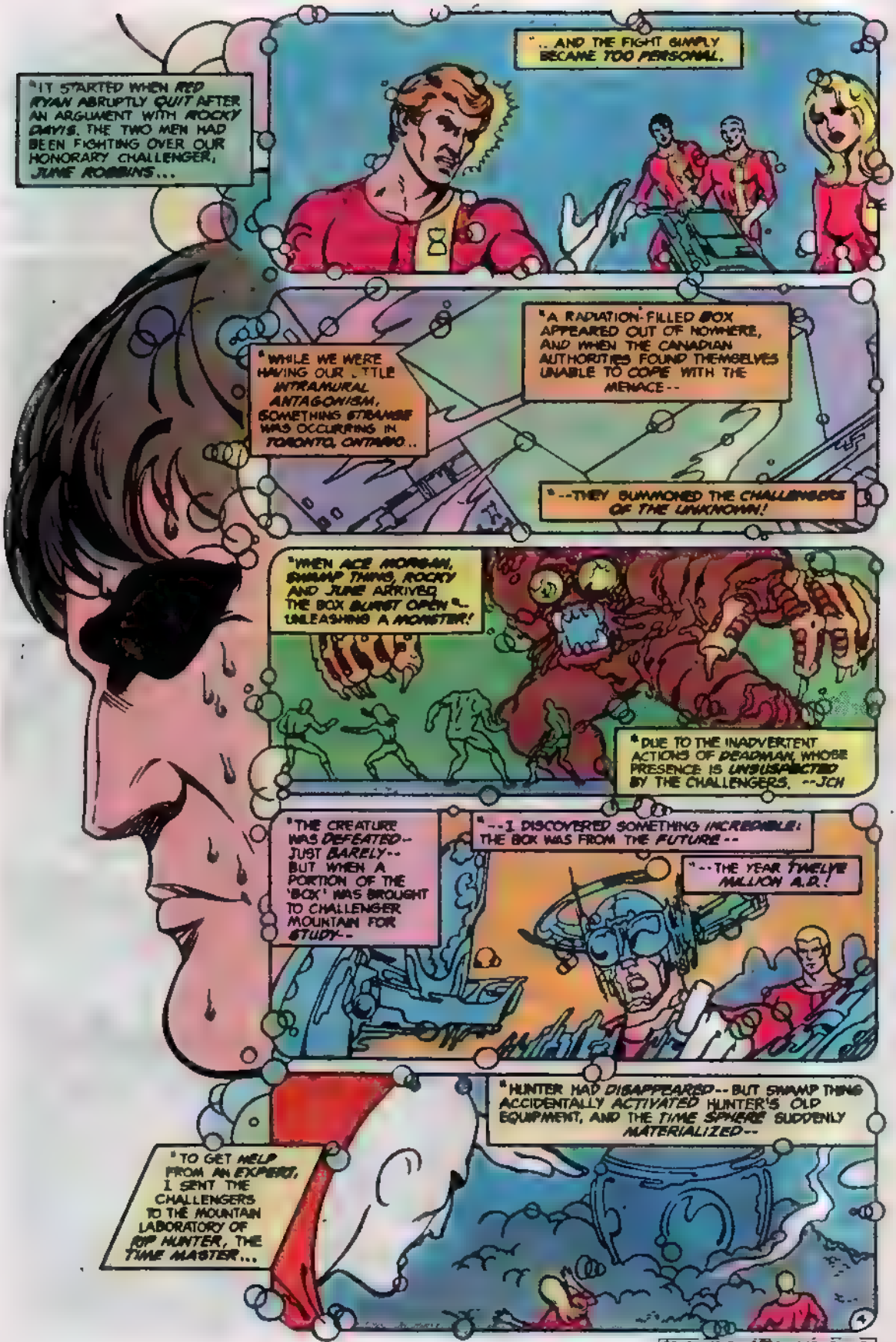





SILENCE... AND PROF HALEY SIGHS, FEELING WEARIER THAN HE'S EVER FELT BEFORE...
MONSTERS FROM BEYOND TIME. IT'S SO INSANE, IF I HADN'T LEARNED THE TRUTH MYSELF... I'D NEVER BELIEVE IT.



CHAPTER ONE: The WAY IT BEGAN


"IT STARTED WHEN RED RYAN ABRUPTLY QUIT AFTER AN ARGUMENT WITH ROCKY DAVIS. THE TWO MEN HAD BEEN FIGHTING OVER OUR HONORARY CHALLENGER, JUNE ROBBINS...
"...AND THE FIGHT SIMPLY BECAME TOO PERSONAL.
"WHILE WE WERE HAVING OUR LITTLE INTRAMURAL ANTAGONISM, SOMETHING STRANGE WAS OCCURRING IN TORONTO, ONTARIO..
"A RADIATION-FILLED BOX APPEARED OUT OF NOWHERE, AND WHEN THE CANADIAN AUTHORITIES FOUND THEMSELVES UNABLE TO COPE WITH THE MENACE--
"--THEY SUMMONED THE CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN!
"WHEN ACE MORGAN, SWAMP THING, ROCKY AND JUNE ARRIVED, THE BOX BURST OPEN--UNLEASHING A MONSTER!
"DUE TO THE INADVERTENT ACTIONS OF DEADMAN, WHOSE PRESENCE IS UNSUSPECTED BY THE CHALLENGERS. --JCH
"THE CREATURE WAS DEFEATED--JUST BARELY--BUT WHEN A PORTION OF THE 'BOX' WAS BROUGHT TO CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN FOR STUDY--
"--I DISCOVERED SOMETHING INCREDIBLE: THE BOX WAS FROM THE FUTURE--
"--THE YEAR TWELVE MILLION A.D.!
"HUNTER HAD DISAPPEARED--BUT SWAMP THING ACCIDENTALLY ACTIVATED HUNTER'S OLD EQUIPMENT, AND THE TIME SPHERE SUDDENLY MATERIALIZED--
"TO GET HELP FROM AN EXPERT, I SENT THE CHALLENGERS TO THE MOUNTAIN LABORATORY OF RIP HUNTER, THE TIME MASTER...
4
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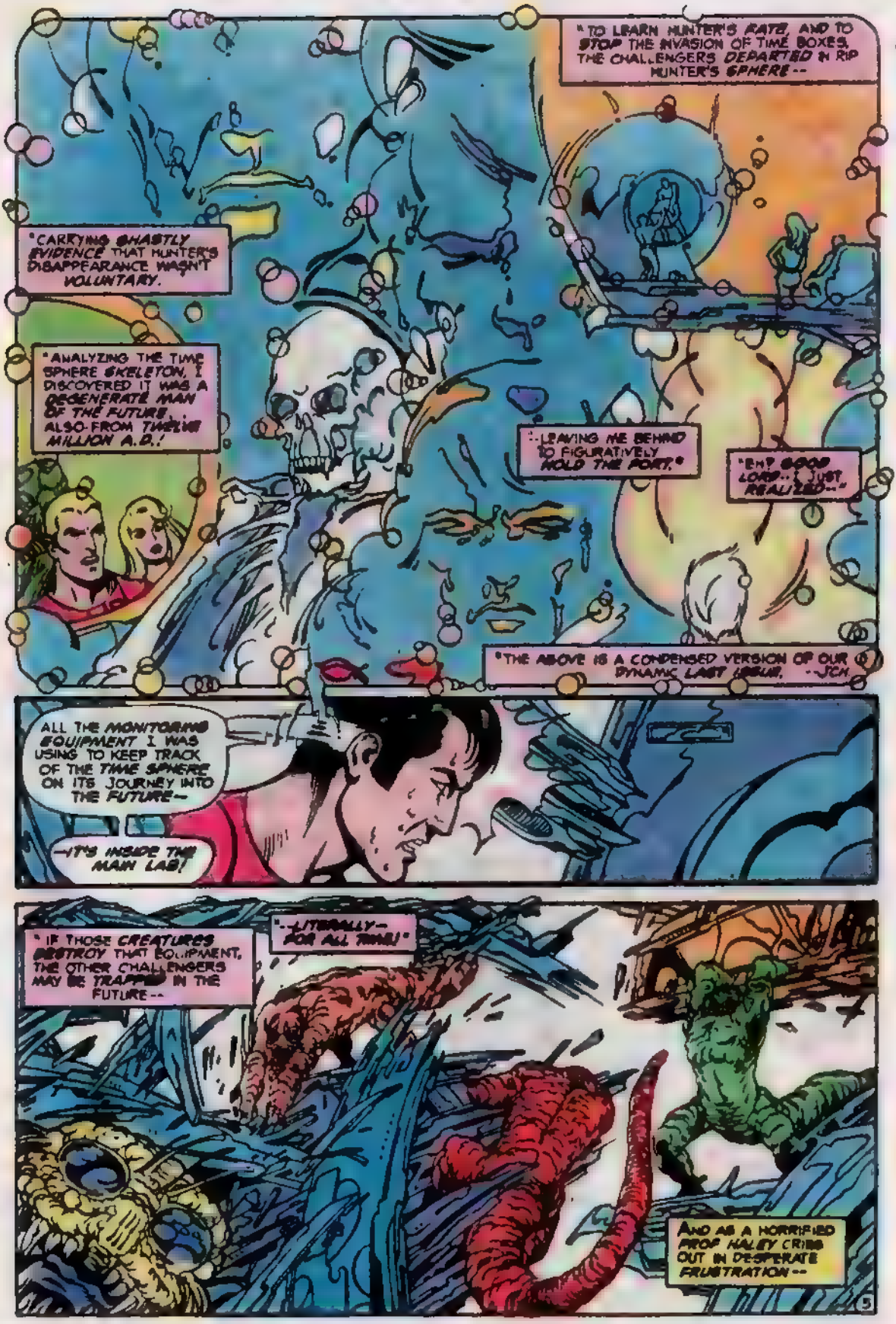
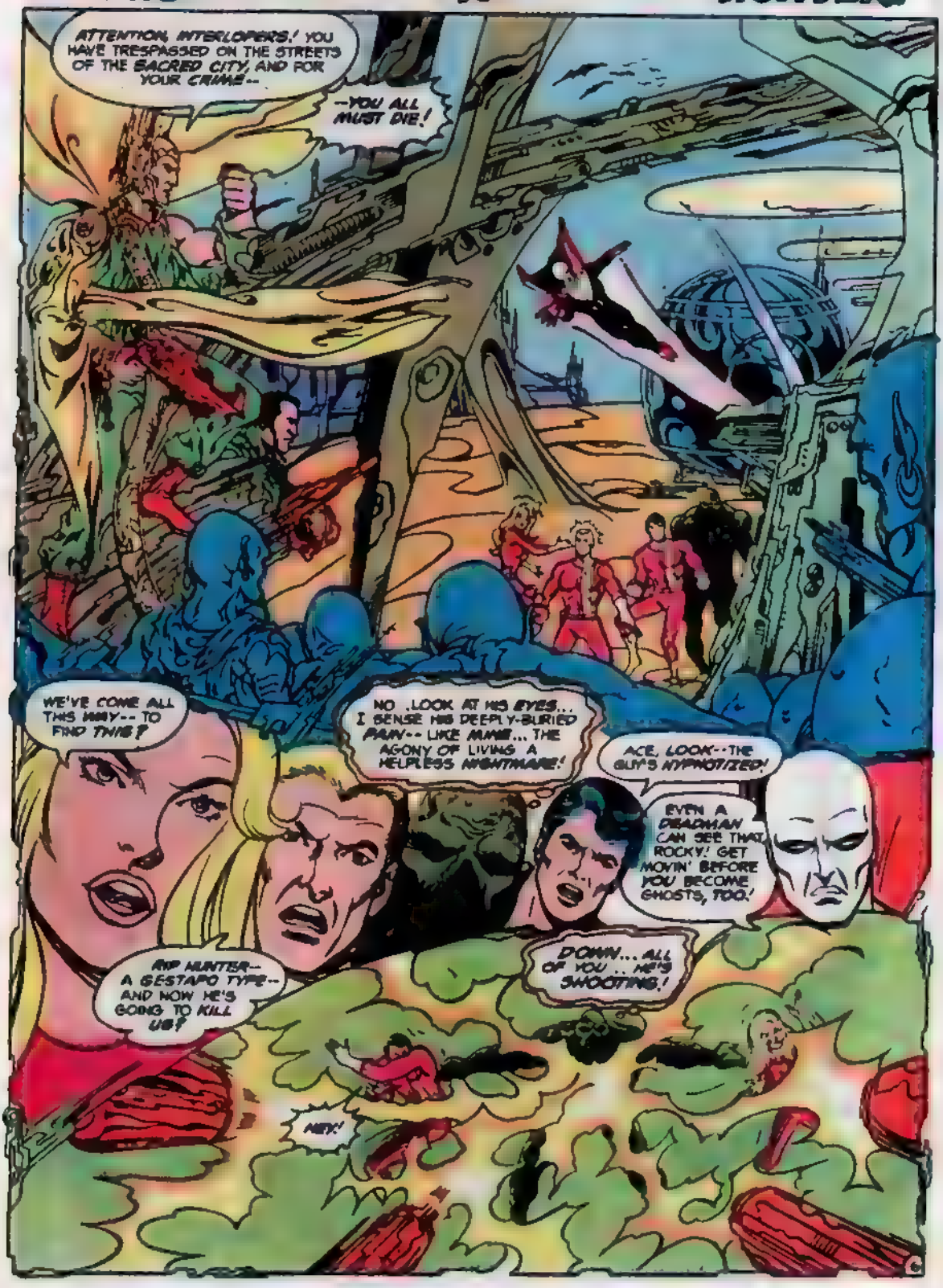
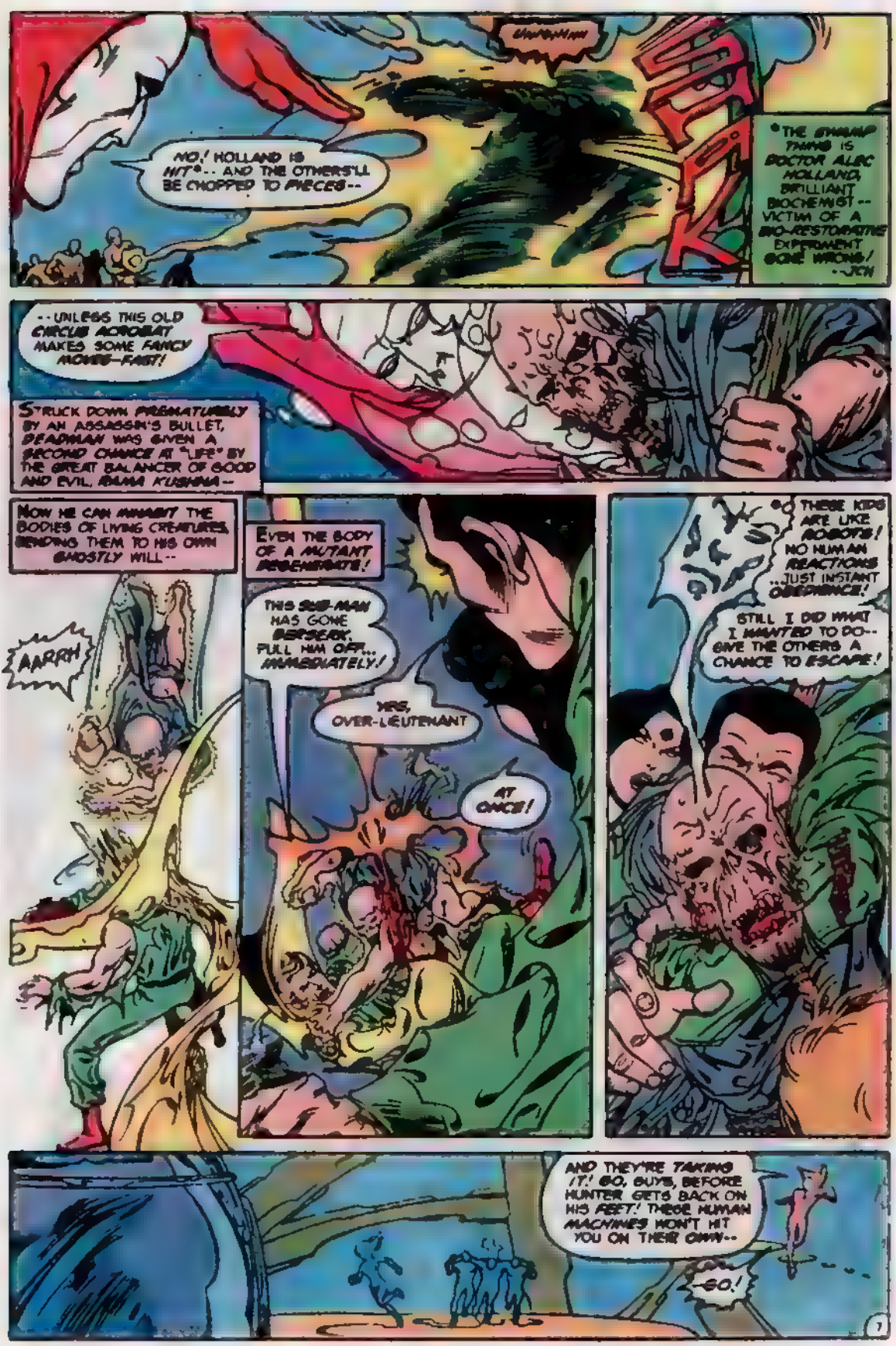

"TO LEARN HUNTER'S FATE, AND TO STOP THE INVASION OF TIME BOXES, THE CHALLENGERS DEPARTED IN RIP HUNTER'S SPHERE--
"CARRYING GHASTLY EVIDENCE THAT HUNTER'S DISAPPEARANCE WASN'T VOLUNTARY.
"ANALYZING THE TIME SPHERE SKELETON, I DISCOVERED IT WAS A DEGENERATE MAN OF THE FUTURE ALSO-FROM TWELVE MILLION A.D.!
"--LEAVING ME BEHIND TO FIGURATIVELY HOLD THE FORT."
"EH? GOOD LORD!.. I JUST REALIZED--"
"THE ABOVE IS A CONDENSED VERSION OF OUR DYNAMIC LAST ISSUE. --JCH.
ALL THE MONITORING EQUIPMENT I WAS USING TO KEEP TRACK OF THE TIME SPHERE ON ITS JOURNEY INTO THE FUTURE--
--IT'S INSIDE THE MAIN LAB!
"IF THOSE CREATURES DESTROY THAT EQUIPMENT, THE OTHER CHALLENGERS MAY BE TRAPPED IN THE FUTURE--
"--LITERALLY--FOR ALL TIME!"
AND AS A HORRIFIED PROF HALEY CRIES OUT IN DESPERATE FRUSTRATION--

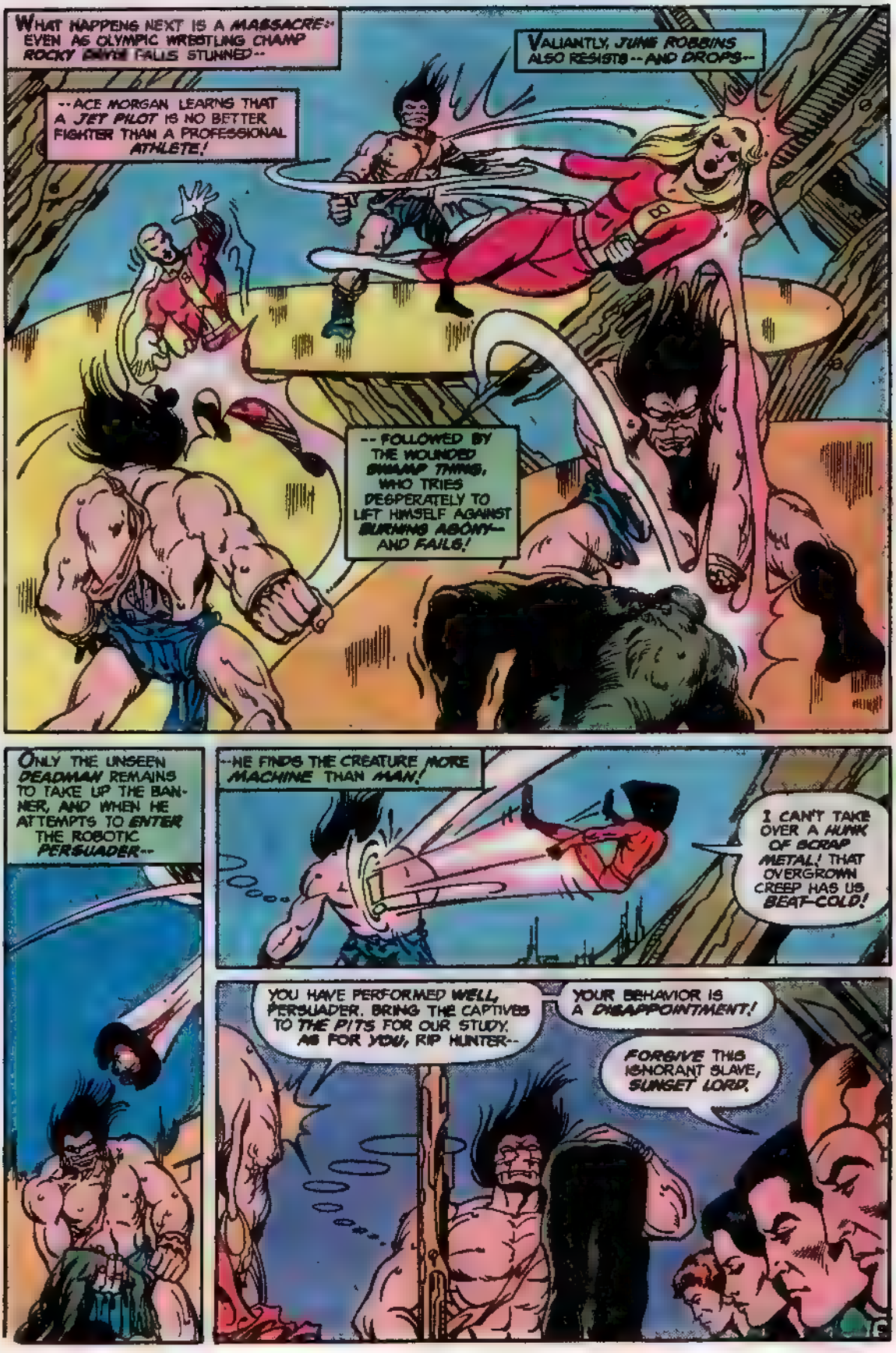
--WE'LL TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO JOIN THE *OTHER* MEMBERS OF OUR CAST ALMOST *TWELVE MILLION YEARS* IN THE FUTURE, WHERE THEY'RE DISCOVERING--

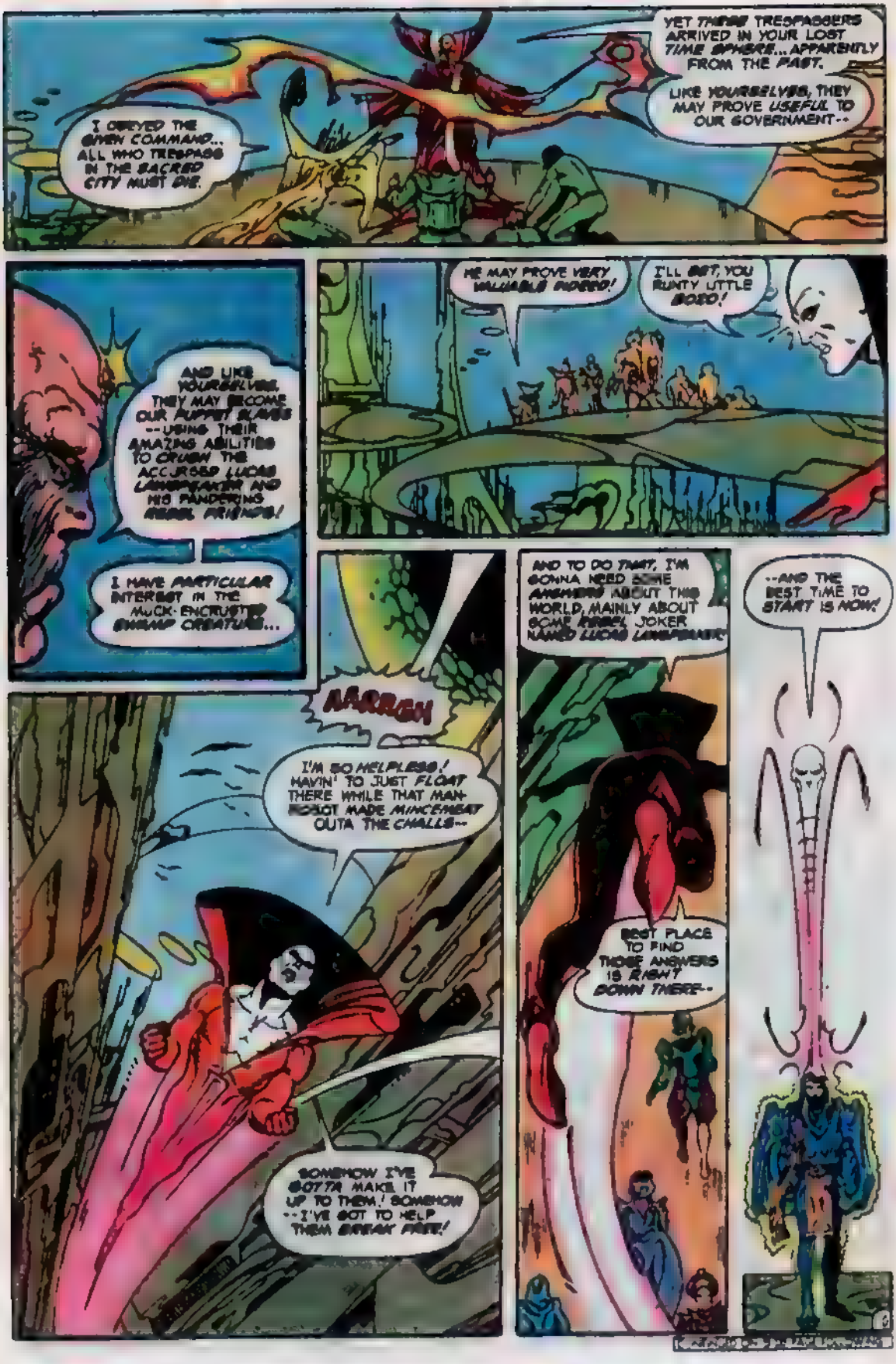
CHAPTER TWO: "IF THIS IS TOMORROW, YOU MUST BE RIP HUNTER!"

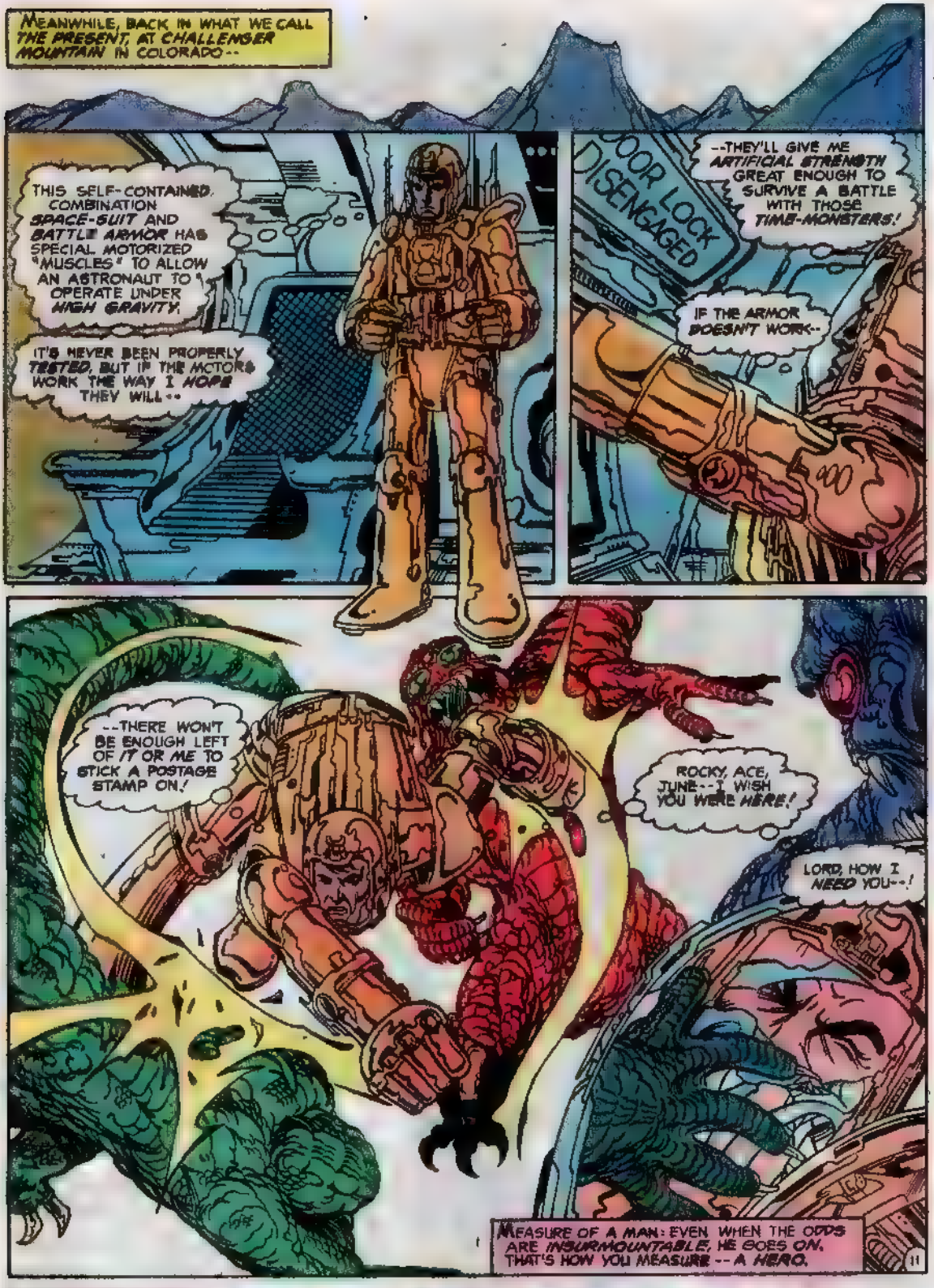

ATTENTION, INTERLOPERS! YOU HAVE TRESPASSED ON THE STREETS OF THE *SACRED CITY*, AND FOR YOUR *CRIME*--
--YOU ALL *MUST DIE!*
WE'VE COME ALL THIS WAY-- TO FIND *THIS?*
NO .LOOK AT HIS *EYES*... I SENSE HIS DEEPLY-BURIED *PAIN*-- LIKE *MINE*... THE AGONY OF LIVING A HELPLESS *NIGHTMARE!*
ACE, LOOK--THE GUY'S *HYPNOTIZED!*
EVEN A *DEADMAN* CAN SEE THAT, ROCKY! GET MOVIN' BEFORE YOU BECOME GHOSTS, TOO!
RIP HUNTER-- A *GESTAPO TYPE*-- AND NOW HE'S GOING TO *KILL US!*
DOWN... ALL OF YOU .. HE'S *SHOOTING!*
HEY!


NO! HOLLAND IS HIT*-- AND THE OTHERS'LL BE CHOPPED TO PIECES--
*THE SWAMP THING IS DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND, BRILLIANT BIOCHEMIST-- VICTIM OF A BIO-RESTORATIVE EXPERIMENT GONE WRONG! --JCH
--UNLESS THIS OLD CIRCUS ACROBAT MAKES SOME FANCY MOVES--FAST!
STRUCK DOWN PREMATURELY BY AN ASSASSIN'S BULLET, DEADMAN WAS GIVEN A SECOND CHANCE AT "LIFE" BY THE GREAT BALANCER OF GOOD AND EVIL, RAMA KUSHNA--
NOW HE CAN INHABIT THE BODIES OF LIVING CREATURES, BENDING THEM TO HIS OWN GHOSTLY WILL--
AARRH
EVEN THE BODY OF A MUTANT DEGENERATE!
THIS SUB-MAN HAS GONE BERSERK. PULL HIM OFF... IMMEDIATELY!
YES, OVER-LIEUTENANT
AT ONCE!
*O THESE KIDS ARE LIKE ROBOTS! NO HUMAN REACTIONS ...JUST INSTANT OBEDIENCE!
STILL I DID WHAT I WANTED TO DO-- GIVE THE OTHERS A CHANCE TO ESCAPE!
AND THEY'RE TAKING IT! GO, GUYS, BEFORE HUNTER GETS BACK ON HIS FEET! THESE HUMAN MACHINES WON'T HIT YOU ON THEIR OWN--
--GO!
7

BUT BEFORE JUNE ROBBINS CAN REACH THE TIME SPHERE'S ENTRANCE--
THAT--IS--FAR--ENOUGH--OUTLINGS.
THAT--GIANT IS LIFTING THE TIME SPHERE--AS THOUGH IT WERE A BUBBLE GUM MACHINE!
HE'S AS STRONG AS SWAMP THING!
THE--SUNSET--LORDS--HAVE ORDERED -YOUR- CAPTURE YOU--WILL--SURRENDER--OR--FACE--PERSUASION.
I DON'T CARE IF HE'S AS STRONG AS A CRUMMY TRUCK! I'VE WRESTLED CROCODILES AND TIGERS--AND I'VE STAYED IN THE RING WITH THREE GUYS AT ONCE--
--AND IF BRUISER HERE WANTS TO PLAY GAMES WITH THE TIME SPHERE--
KRAK
--HE'S ASKING FOR A MOUTHFUL OF LOOSE TEETH!
YAAAH! MY HAND--!
I-AM-THE-PERSUADER--OUTLING
IF--YOU--REFUSE--TO--SURRENDER--
YOU--MUST--BE--PERSUADED!


WHAT HAPPENS NEXT IS A MASSACRE--EVEN AS OLYMPIC WRESTLING CHAMP ROCKY DAVIS FALLS STUNNED--
VALIANTLY, JUNE ROBBINS ALSO RESISTS--AND DROPS--
--ACE MORGAN LEARNS THAT A JET PILOT IS NO BETTER FIGHTER THAN A PROFESSIONAL ATHLETE!
--FOLLOWED BY THE WOUNDED SWAMP THING, WHO TRIES DESPERATELY TO LIFT HIMSELF AGAINST BURNING ABONY--AND FAILS!
ONLY THE UNSEEN DEADMAN REMAINS TO TAKE UP THE BANNER, AND WHEN HE ATTEMPTS TO ENTER THE ROBOTIC PERSUADER--
--HE FINDS THE CREATURE MORE MACHINE THAN MAN!
I CAN'T TAKE OVER A HUNK OF SCRAP METAL! THAT OVERGROWN CREEP HAS US BEAT--COLD!
YOU HAVE PERFORMED WELL, PERSUADER. BRING THE CAPTIVES TO THE PITS FOR OUR STUDY. AS FOR YOU, RIP HUNTER--
YOUR BEHAVIOR IS A DISAPPOINTMENT!
FORGIVE THIS IGNORANT SLAVE, SUNSET LORD.

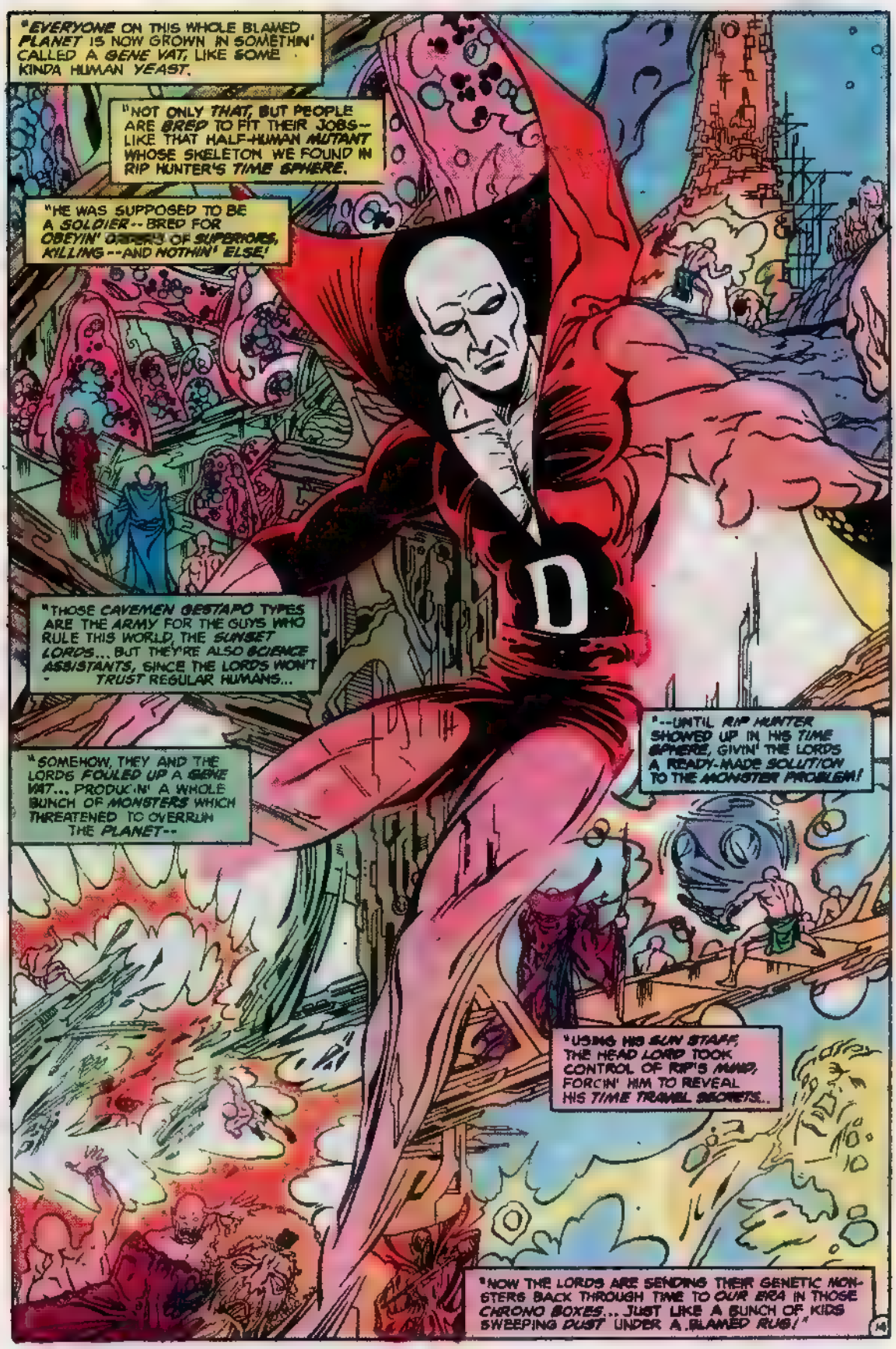

I OBEYED THE GIVEN COMMAND... ALL WHO TRESPASS IN THE SACRED CITY MUST DIE.
YET THESE TRESPASSERS ARRIVED IN YOUR LOST TIME SPHERE... APPARENTLY FROM THE PAST.
LIKE YOURSELVES, THEY MAY PROVE USEFUL TO OUR GOVERNMENT--
AND LIKE YOURSELVES, THEY MAY BECOME OUR PUPPET SLAVES --USING THEIR AMAZING ABILITIES TO CRUSH THE ACCURSED LUCAS LANDSPEAKER AND HIS PANDERING REBEL FRIENDS!
I HAVE PARTICULAR INTEREST IN THE MUCK-ENCRUSTED SWAMP CREATURE...
HE MAY PROVE VERY VALUABLE INDEED!
I'LL BET, YOU RUNTY LITTLE BOZO!
AARRGH
I'M SO HELPLESS! HAVIN' TO JUST FLOAT THERE WHILE THAT MAN-ROBOT MADE MINCEMEAT OUTA THE CHALLS--
SOMEHOW I'VE GOTTA MAKE IT UP TO THEM! SOMEHOW --I'VE GOT TO HELP THEM BREAK FREE!
AND TO DO THAT, I'M GONNA NEED SOME ANSWERS ABOUT THIS WORLD, MAINLY ABOUT SOME REBEL JOKER NAMED LUCAS LANDSPEAKER!
BEST PLACE TO FIND THOSE ANSWERS IS RIGHT DOWN THERE--
--AND THE BEST TIME TO START IS NOW!

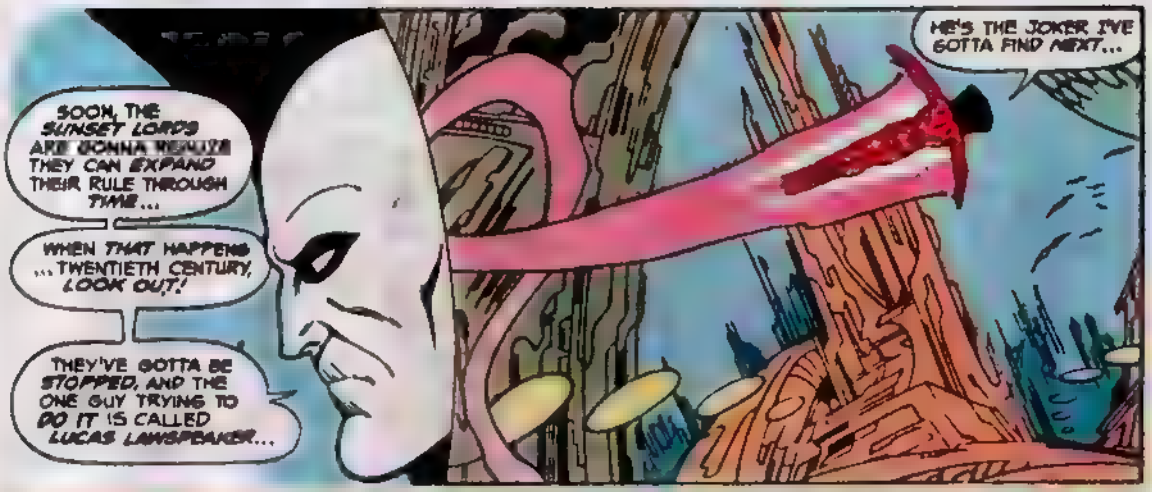

MEANWHILE, BACK IN WHAT WE CALL THE PRESENT, AT CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN IN COLORADO--
THIS SELF-CONTAINED, COMBINATION SPACE-SUIT AND BATTLE ARMOR HAS SPECIAL MOTORIZED "MUSCLES" TO ALLOW AN ASTRONAUT TO OPERATE UNDER HIGH GRAVITY.
IT'S NEVER BEEN PROPERLY TESTED, BUT IF THE MOTORS WORK THE WAY I HOPE THEY WILL--
DOOR LOCK DISENGAGED
--THEY'LL GIVE ME ARTIFICIAL STRENGTH GREAT ENOUGH TO SURVIVE A BATTLE WITH THOSE TIME-MONSTERS!
IF THE ARMOR DOESN'T WORK--
--THERE WON'T BE ENOUGH LEFT OF IT OR ME TO STICK A POSTAGE STAMP ON.
ROCKY, ACE, JUNE--I WISH YOU WERE HERE!
LORD, HOW I NEED YOU--!
MEASURE OF A MAN: EVEN WHEN THE ODDS ARE INSURMOUNTABLE, HE GOES ON. THAT'S HOW YOU MEASURE -- A HERO.
11

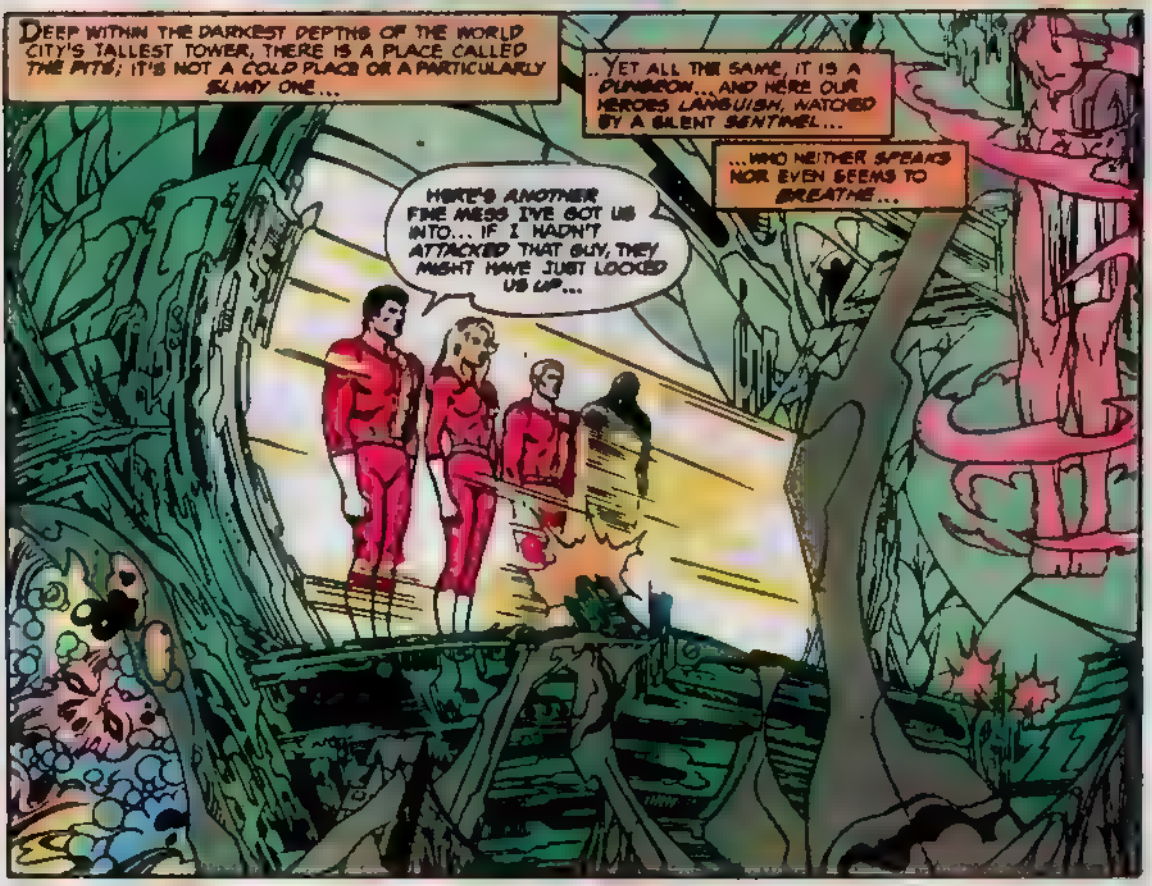
CHAPTER THREE: TIME TIMES TERROR

AND, SPEAKING OF ABSENT CHALLENGERS...
WHAT AM I DOING IN A METROPOLIS MOTEL WHEN MY BUDDIES MAY NEED ME IN COLORADO?
ACCORDING TO THAT NEWS REPORT ON THE TUBE, THE CHALLENGERS HAVEN'T SHOWN UP ANYWHERE TO STOP THEM!
AND KNOWING PROF HALLEY, THEY PROBABLY BROUGHT IT BACK TO THE MOUNTAIN!
ONLY--NOW MEMORIES OF THE BOXES ARE APPEARING EVERYWHERE--AND THE CHALLENGERS HAVEN'T SHOWN UP ANYWHERE TO STOP THEM!
MEANING--MY BUDDIES ARE IN TROUBLE--
--WHILE I'M HERE MOONIN' OVER MY HEART PHOBE!
HEAVY SOUNDS FROM THE STREET--?
5 SECONDS LATER, AFTER A ROCKET-FAST ELEVATOR HOP TO THE MOTEL LOBBY--
IT'S ONE OF THE BOXES--RIGHT HERE IN THE HEART OF METROPOLIS!
SUPERMAN MUST BE OFF IN OUTER SPACE, OR NEW HANDLE THIS--
BUT SINCE HE ISN'T HANDLING THIS, IT LOOKS LIKE IT'S UP TO ME!
THAT TV NEWSTRUCK SHOULD HAVE THE NECESSARY ELECTRONIC EQUIPMENT--
HEY! WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE? THAT'S HUGE-TV PROPERTY!
THE NAME'S RED RYAN, KIDDO--
--I'M A CHALLENGER OF THE UNKNOWN!
12
CONTINUED ON 5 PAGE FOLLOWING

THE WORDS SOUND RIGHT; AND THE REPORTER SHUTS UP. MOMENTS LATER, THE WORLD'S GREATEST ELECTRONICS EXPERT HAS DONE HIS WORK, AND--
A LONG SHOT--BUT I'VE MADE A MAKESHIFT LASER OUT OF THIS MINI-CAM! NOW, IF THIS DAMN THING DOESN'T EXPLODE--
IT DOESN'T.
ZZZRAM
CAN'T-- BELIEVE IT.
YOU BETTER BELIEVE IT, MISTER THAT'S ONE BABY DEEP-FRIED, BUT THERE ARE LOTS MORE WHERE HE CAME FROM...
.. SO IF YOU GUYS WILL EXCUSE ME.
I'VE GOT TO CATCH A PLANE... TO COLORADO.
"AT THAT MOMENT," TWELVE MILLION YEARS LATER...
I'VE JUST SPENT SIX HOURS HOPPIN' FROM BODY TO BODY, SEARCHING THIS BURG HIGH AND LOW...
AND WHAT I'VE LEARNED... IS INCREDIBLE!
THESE SUNSET LORDS RULE THIS CITY AND THE WORLD LIKE THEIR OWN PRIVATE PLANTATION. IT'S MIND CONTROL ALL RIGHT--
--BUT NOT EVERYONE IS SUSCEPTIBLE. THERE ARE REBELS LIKE LUCAS LAWSPEAKER BUT I FOUND OUT SOMETHING ELSE--

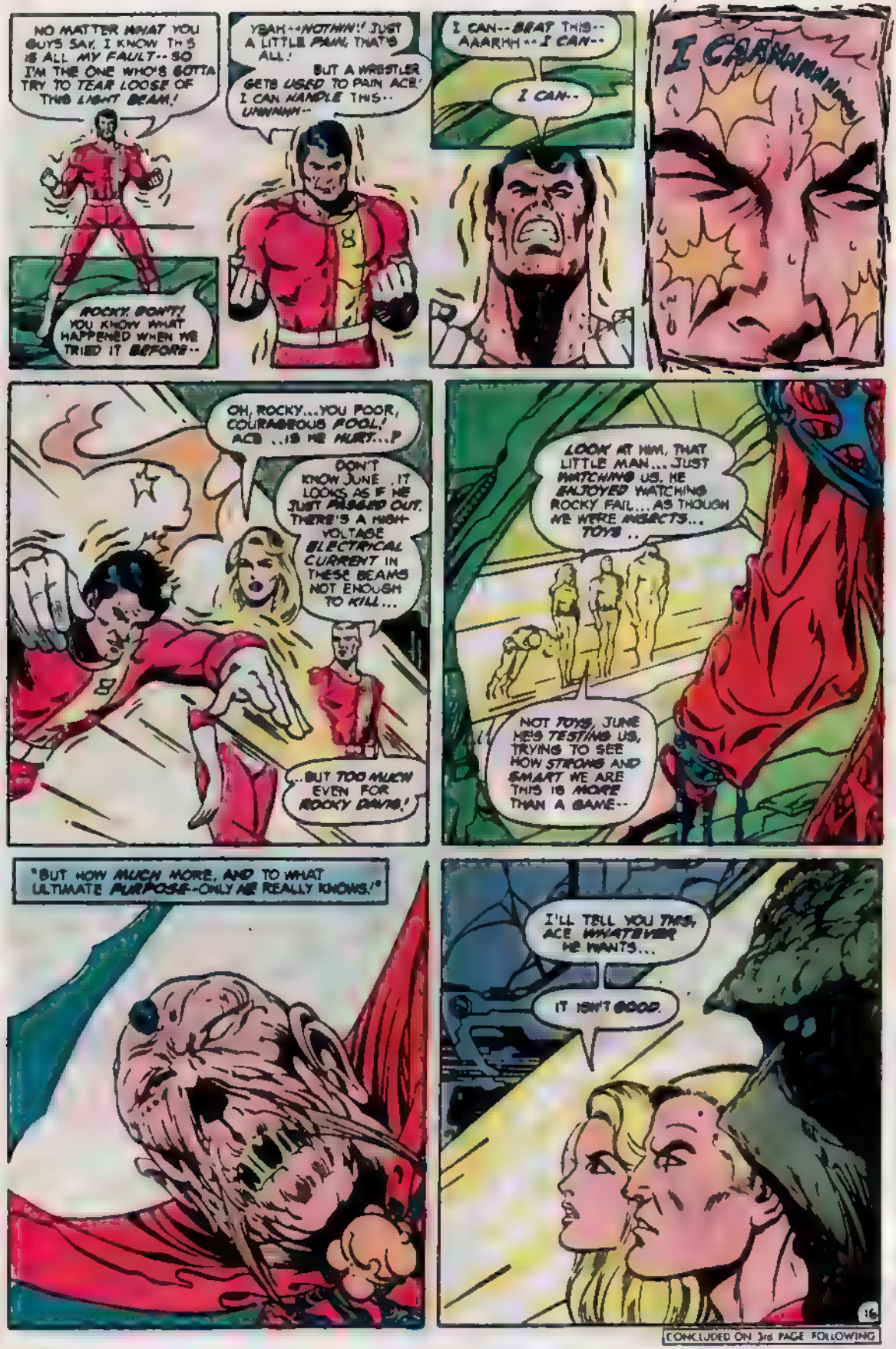

"EVERYONE ON THIS WHOLE BLAMED PLANET IS NOW GROWN IN SOMETHIN' CALLED A GENE VAT, LIKE SOME KINDA HUMAN YEAST.
"NOT ONLY THAT, BUT PEOPLE ARE BRED TO FIT THEIR JOBS--LIKE THAT HALF-HUMAN MUTANT WHOSE SKELETON WE FOUND IN RIP HUNTER'S TIME SPHERE.
"HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE A SOLDIER--BRED FOR OBEYIN' ORDERS OF SUPERIORS, KILLING--AND NOTHIN' ELSE!
"THOSE CAVEMEN GESTAPO TYPES ARE THE ARMY FOR THE GUYS WHO RULE THIS WORLD, THE SUNSET LORDS... BUT THEY'RE ALSO SCIENCE ASSISTANTS, SINCE THE LORDS WON'T TRUST REGULAR HUMANS...
"SOMEHOW, THEY AND THE LORDS FOULED UP A GENE VAT... PRODUCIN' A WHOLE BUNCH OF MONSTERS WHICH THREATENED TO OVERRUN THE PLANET--
"--UNTIL RIP HUNTER SHOWED UP IN HIS TIME SPHERE, GIVIN' THE LORDS A READY-MADE SOLUTION TO THE MONSTER PROBLEM!
"USING HIS SUN STAFF, THE HEAD LORD TOOK CONTROL OF RIP'S MIND, FORCIN' HIM TO REVEAL HIS TIME TRAVEL SECRETS...
"NOW THE LORDS ARE SENDING THEIR GENETIC MONSTERS BACK THROUGH TIME TO OUR ERA IN THOSE CHRONO BOXES... JUST LIKE A BUNCH OF KIDS SWEEPING DUST UNDER A BLAMED RUG!"


SOON, THE SUNSET LORDS ARE GONNA REALIZE THEY CAN EXPAND THEIR RULE THROUGH TIME...
WHEN THAT HAPPENS ...TWENTIETH CENTURY, LOOK OUT!
THEY'VE GOTTA BE STOPPED, AND THE ONE GUY TRYING TO DO IT IS CALLED LUCAS LAWSPEAKER...
HE'S THE JOKER I'VE GOTTA FIND NEXT...


DEEP WITHIN THE DARKEST DEPTHS OF THE WORLD CITY'S TALLEST TOWER, THERE IS A PLACE CALLED THE PITS; IT'S NOT A COLD PLACE OR A PARTICULARLY SLIMY ONE...
..YET ALL THE SAME, IT IS A DUNGEON... AND HERE OUR HEROES LANGUISH, WATCHED BY A SILENT SENTINEL...
...WHO NEITHER SPEAKS NOR EVEN SEEMS TO BREATHE...
HERE'S ANOTHER FINE MESS I'VE GOT US INTO... IF I HADN'T ATTACKED THAT GUY, THEY MIGHT HAVE JUST LOCKED US UP...

CHAPTER 4 A PIT by ANY OTHER NAME

...INSTEAD OF PARALYZIN' US WITH THESE LIGHTS...
FORGET THE RECRIMINATIONS, ROCKY NOBODY BLAMES YOU.
ACTUALLY YOU WERE RATHER BRAVE--FOR A PUNCH DRUNK FIGHTER.
YEAH, SURE--THANKS.


NO MATTER WHAT YOU GUYS SAY, I KNOW THIS IS ALL MY FAULT--SO I'M THE ONE WHO'S GOTTA TRY TO TEAR LOOSE OF THIS LIGHT BEAM!
ROCKY, DON'T! YOU KNOW WHAT HAPPENED WHEN WE TRIED IT BEFORE--
YEAH--NOTHIN'! JUST A LITTLE PAIN, THAT'S ALL!
BUT A WRESTLER GETS USED TO PAIN ACE! I CAN HANDLE THIS--UHHHHH--
I CAN--BEAT THIS--AAARHH--I CAN--
I CAN--
I CAAAHHHHHHH
OH, ROCKY...YOU POOR, COURAGEOUS FOOL! ACE ...IS HE HURT...?
DON'T KNOW JUNE, IT LOOKS AS IF HE JUST PASSED OUT. THERE'S A HIGH-VOLTAGE ELECTRICAL CURRENT IN THESE BEAMS NOT ENOUGH TO KILL...
...BUT TOO MUCH EVEN FOR ROCKY DAVIS!
LOOK AT HIM, THAT LITTLE MAN... JUST WATCHING US. HE ENJOYED WATCHING ROCKY FAIL... AS THOUGH WE WERE INSECTS... TOYS..
NOT TOYS, JUNE HE'S TESTING US, TRYING TO SEE HOW STRONG AND SMART WE ARE THIS IS MORE THAN A GAME--
"BUT HOW MUCH MORE, AND TO WHAT ULTIMATE PURPOSE--ONLY HE REALLY KNOWS!"
I'LL TELL YOU THIS, ACE WHATEVER HE WANTS...
IT ISN'T GOOD.
16

CONCLUDED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING

ELSEWHERE...
EVERY LEAD I'VE FOUND POINTS IN ONE DIRECTION.. THIS SLUM AREA THE LORDS CALL BLACK ALLEY.
SCUTTLEBUTT SAYS THERE'S A REBEL MEETING IN THAT "TENEMENT"!. SO THAT'S WHERE I'M HEADED!
HUMH! MY INFORMERS WEREN'T KIDDING! MUST BE ENOUGH BODIES HERE TO PACK THE WHOLE DAMNED PHILHARMONIC HALL!
BUT WHERE'S THIS LUCAS LAWSPEAKER I HEARD SO MUCH ABOUT?
MAYBE I'D BETTER JUST HANG AROUND -- BE ACCOMMODATING TILL I GET THE OLD LAY OF THE LAND.
THIS HUSKY GUY LOOKS LIKE A GOOD MOST...
THINK I'LL JUST MINGLE UNTIL I FIND OUT WHO'S--
WHO THE--?
I AM IN CHARGE, BOSTON BRAND! YOU WHO CALL YOURSELF DEADMAN. WELCOME TO BLACK ALLEY.. WELCOME TO OUR REBELLION.
FIRST LET ME ASSURE YOU, YOUR FRIENDS THE CHALLENGERS WILL BE AIDED BY THE FULL FORCE OF OUR ORGANIZATION. MY WORD ON IT.
AS FOR MY NAME, IT IS LUCAS, BUT YOU CAN CALL ME--
SWEET MOTHER OF MERCY--HE'S READING MY MIND!
--LAWSPEAKER!

AND ON THAT RATHER AMBIGUOUS NOTE WE MUST TAKE LEAVE OF OUR GHOSTLY CHALLENGER, KNOWING THAT WE'LL REJOIN HIM NEXT ISSUE FOR THE CONCLUSION OF--

TWELVE MILLION YEARS TO TWILIGHT!

NEXT ISSUE ON SALE DURING THE FOURTH WEEK IN MARCH

NO. 87 JULY
30453
35¢
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
HURRY, CHALLENGERS! ENTER THE TIME-SPHERE! YESTERDAY'S THE ONLY PLACE YOU CAN SURVIVE.
ARAYUK GIORDANO
IS THIS THE DEATH-CHEATER'S LAST CHALLENGE?
"12 MILLION YEARS to TWILIGHT!"

SURVIVING A CATACLYSMIC AIRCRAFT CRASH THAT SHOULD HAVE BEEN FATAL--FOUR ADVENTURERS NOW CONSIDER THEMSELVES LIVING ON BORROWED TIME--FOUR MEN, JOINED BY A WOMAN IN LOVE WITH DANGER, WHO FACE ANY RISK--ANY PERIL--ANY FOE! TOGETHER THEY ARE--
CHALLENGERS OF THE UNKNOWN
Guest Starring DEADMAN and SWAMP THING
THE PLACE: A THEATRE HALL IN THE HELL-HOLE SLUM KNOWN AS BLACK ALLEY--A CURSED SPOT NOT ON ANY MAP DRAWN OF THE WORLD TODAY FOR IT BELONGS TO THE BLEAK, FAR-DISTANT FUTURE OF TWELVE MILLION A.D..
IT IS TO THIS PLACE AND TIME THAT THE INVISIBLE SPECTRE DEADMAN CAME MOMENTS AGO TO SEEK OUT THE ONE MAN ABLE TO SAVE THE TWENTIETH CENTURY FROM A SCOURGE OF MUTANT MONSTERS.
YOU CAN RELAX NOW, DEADMAN--MY REBELS HAVE BEEN DISPATCHED TO PREPARE FOR TONIGHT WHEN WE SHALL FREE YOUR FRIENDS! SO BE AT PEACE--
--YOU HAVE FOUND LUCAS LAWSPEAKER!
HIRONE, JOGAKO!
WHEN A MORTAL BEGINS READING MY MIND--ESPECIALLY WHEN I'M INSIDE A GUY'S BODY--IT'S WORRYING TIME!
TWELVE MILLION YEARS TO TWILIGHT
CHRIS & BRUCE CLAREMONT CO-SCRIPTERS
KEITH GIFFEN PENCILLER
JOHN CELARDO - INKER
BEN ODA - LETTERER
JERRY SERPE - COLORS
JACK C. HARRIS - EDITOR

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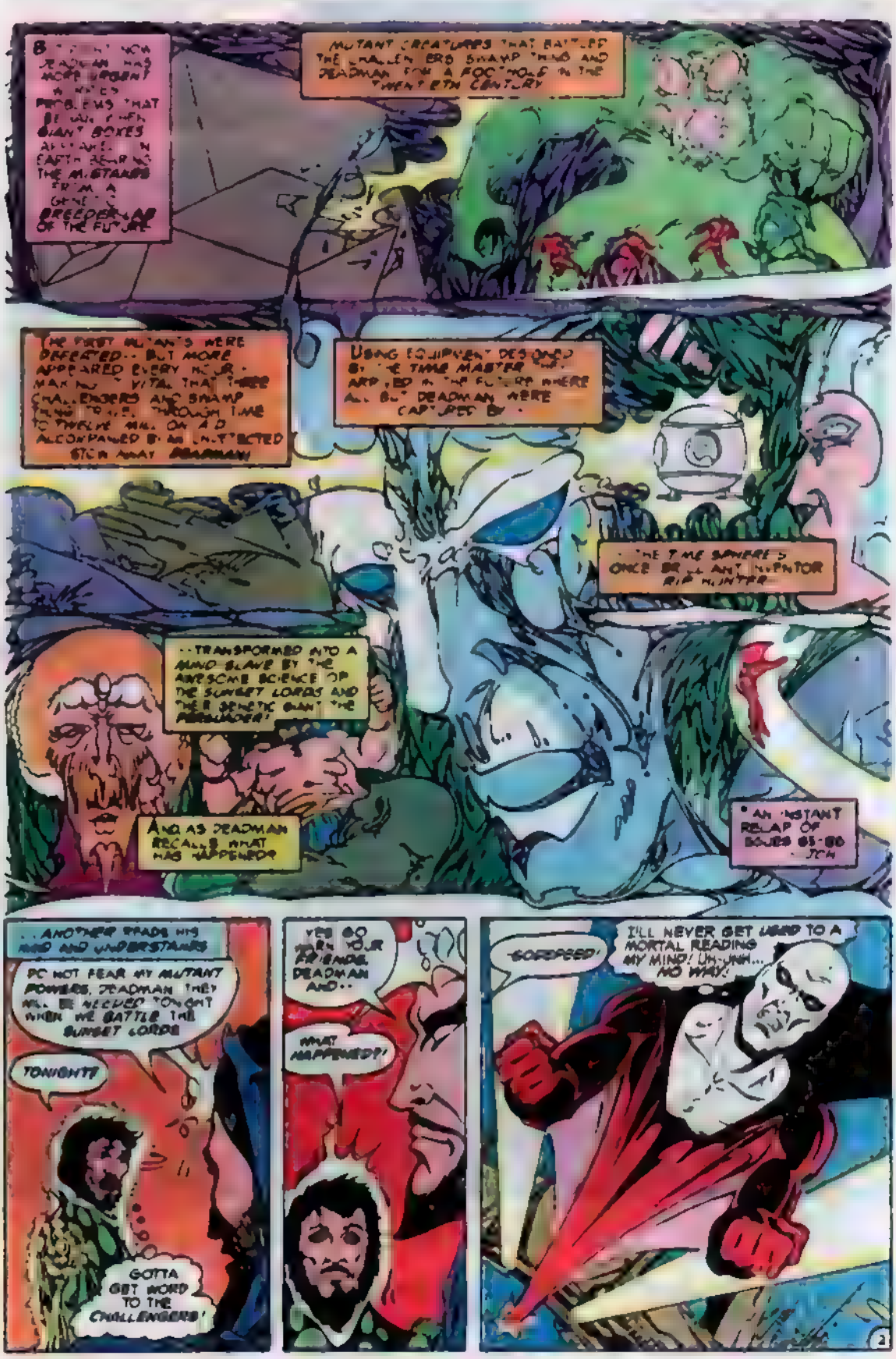
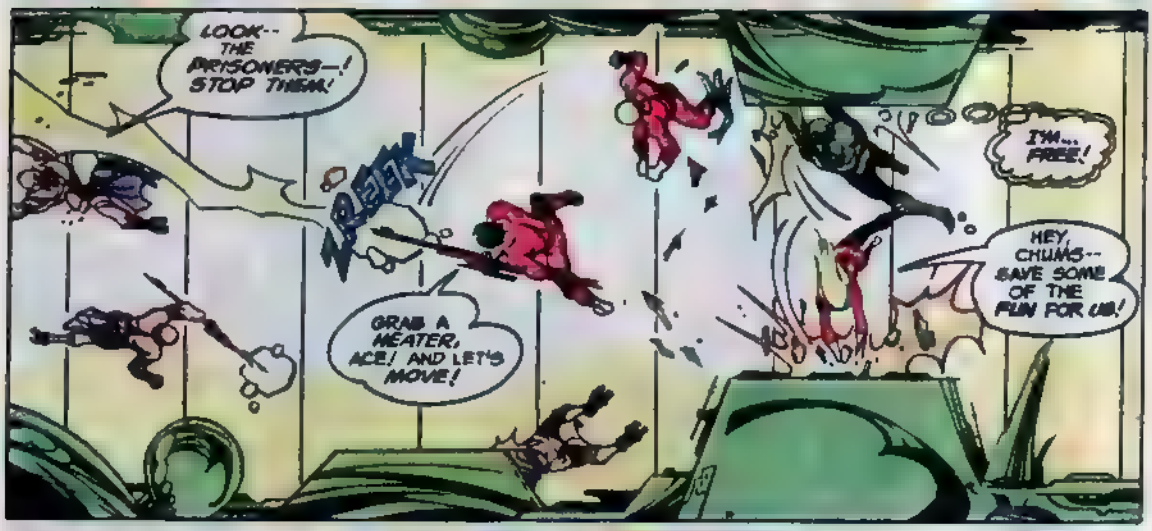

MUTANT CREATURES THAT BATTLED THE CHALLENGERS SWAMP THING AND DEADMAN FOR A FOOTHOLD IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY
THE FIRST MUTANTS WERE DEFEATED-- BUT MORE APPEARED EVERY HOUR. MAKING IT VITAL THAT THREE CHALLENGERS AND SWAMP THING TRAVEL THROUGH TIME TO TWELVE MILLION A.D. ACCOMPANIED BY AN UNAFFECTED STOW AWAY DEADMAN!
USING EQUIPMENT DESIGNED BY THE TIME MASTER THEY ARRIVED IN THE FUTURE WHERE ALL BUT DEADMAN WERE CAPTURED BY...
...THE TIME SPHERE'S ONCE BRILLIANT INVENTOR RIP HUNTER
...TRANSFORMED INTO A MIND SLAVE BY THE AWESOME SCIENCE OF THE SUNSET LORDS AND THEIR GENETIC GIANT THE PERSUADER!
AND AS DEADMAN RECALLS WHAT HAS HAPPENED?
AN INSTANT RECAP OF ISSUES 65-66 ...JCH
...ANOTHER READS HIS MIND AND UNDERSTANDS
DO NOT FEAR MY MUTANT POWERS, DEADMAN. THEY WILL BE NEEDED TONIGHT WHEN WE BATTLE THE SUNSET LORDS
TONIGHT?
GOTTA GET WORD TO THE CHALLENGERS!
YES GO WARN YOUR FRIENDS, DEADMAN AND--
WHAT HAPPENED?!
-SOFFEED!
I'LL NEVER GET USED TO A MORTAL READING MY MIND! UH-UHH... NO WAY!
2

MEANWHILE IN THE PALACE OF THE SUNSET LORDS, CHALLENGERS ACE MORGAN, JUNE ROBBINS, ROCKY DAVIS AND THEIR COLLEAGUE, SWAMP THING ARE ALL UNAWARE OF THEIR INVISIBLE ALLY! THEY BELIEVE THEY ARE ALONE--AND ARE PLANNING ACCORDINGLY..
CHAPTER 1
ASSAULT ON SUNSET
FOOLS--YOU'VE DARED TO INTERFERE WITH OUR MASTER PLAN! BUT ONCE YOUR MINDS HAVE BEEN RE-PROGRAMMED BY THE PERSUADER--
..YOU'LL BE LOYAL TO US FOREVER! TAKE THEM AWAY!
I DON'T LIKE WHAT THAT CREEP SAID! YOU GOT ANY IDEAS HOW TO GET OUT OF HERE, ACE?
SORRY, JUNE CAN'T THINK OF A THING, DR. HOLLAND?*
FIRST, WE BREAK SHACKLES THEN WE... FIGHT!
THAT'S EASIER SAID THAN DONE, BIG FELLA.. EXCEPT MAYBE FOR YOU!
* THE CHALLENGERS DISCOVERED THAT SWAMP THING WAS DR ALEC HOLLAND IN SEN #84. -JCH
BUT MAYBE THERE'S A CHANCE IF--
ACE, GLOM THOSE ARCHES AHEAD OF US!
WHAT ABOUT THEM, ROCKY?
JUST MAYBE WE CAN MANGLE THESE MANACLES ON THEM... AND WITH LUCK..
GOOD IDEA! YOU KNOW, YOU'RE GETTING SMART IN YOUR OLD AGE PAL!
3

AND, AS THE CHALLENGERS AND SWAMP THING PASS THROUGH THE BIZARRE FUTURE STRUCTURE ROCKY GRUNTS--THEN CALLS THE PLAY...
NOW, ACE!
GOTCHA!
ZAZ'SK
!!!SSSS!
KRAK!



KILL THE INVADERS! KILL THEM ALL!
THEY LOOK BIG EVEN TO ME! BUT MUSCLES AIN'T EVERYTHING --AND I'M ONE FELLA WHO OUGHTA KNOW!
HERE THEY COME!
4

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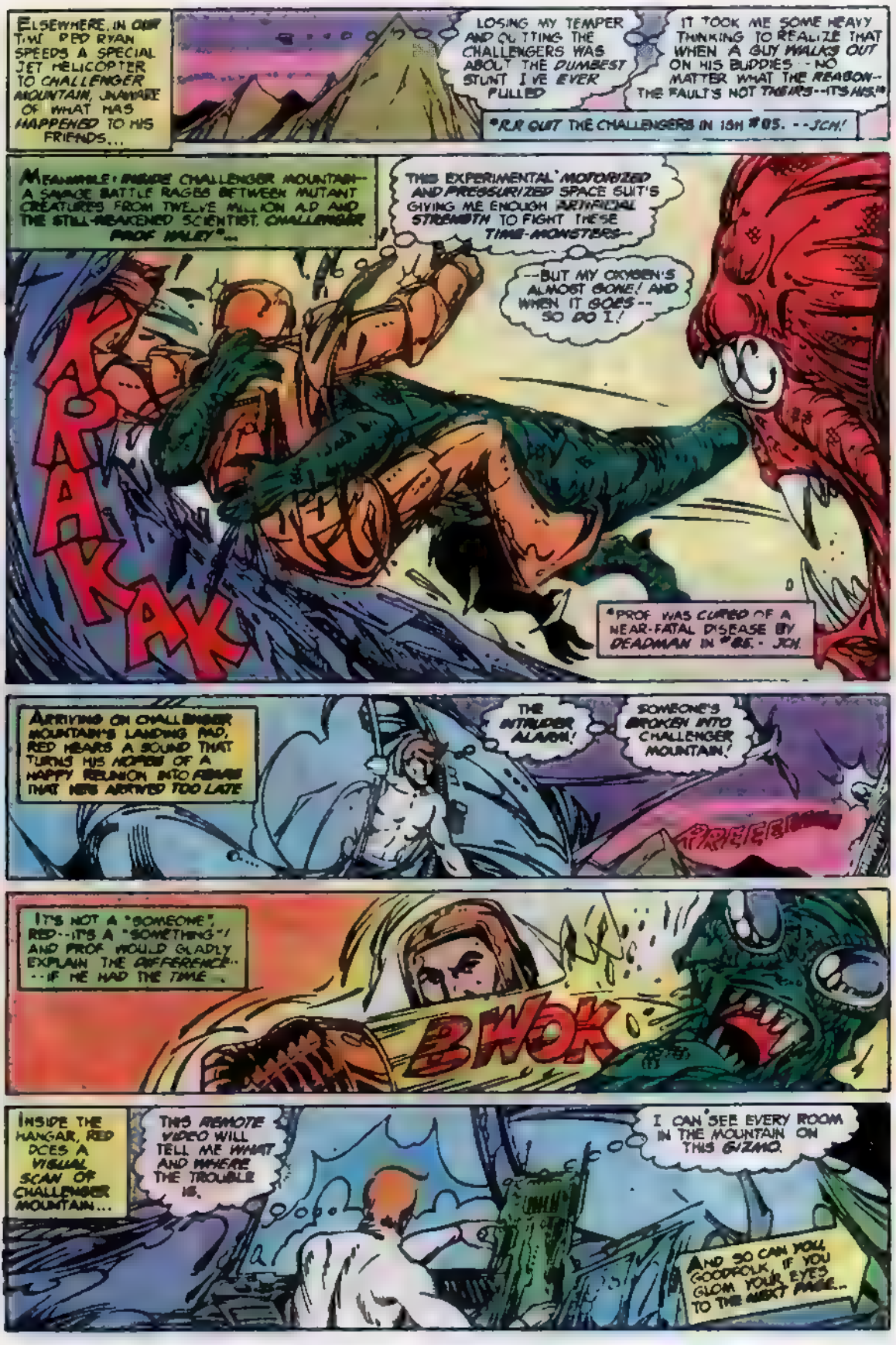
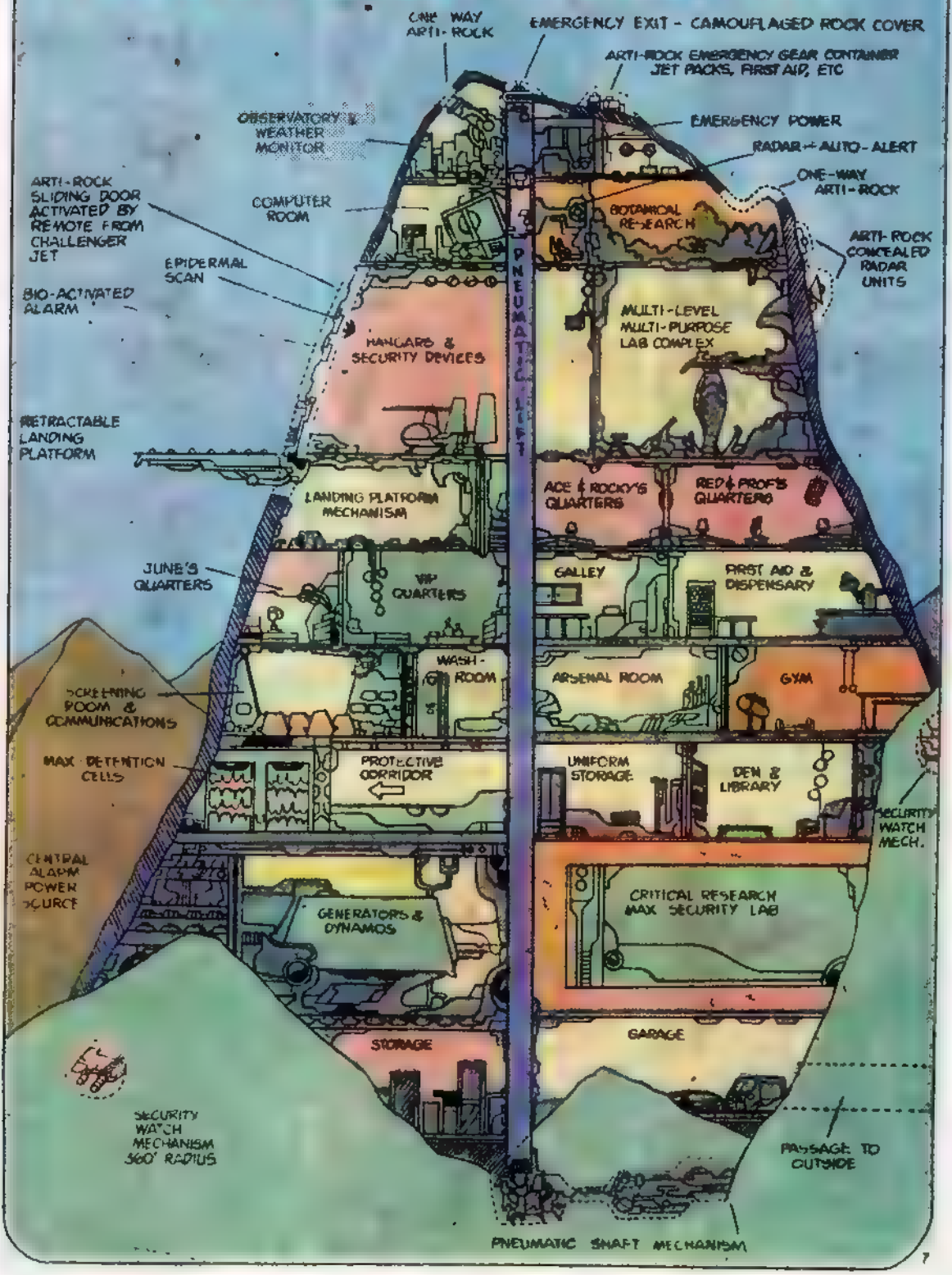
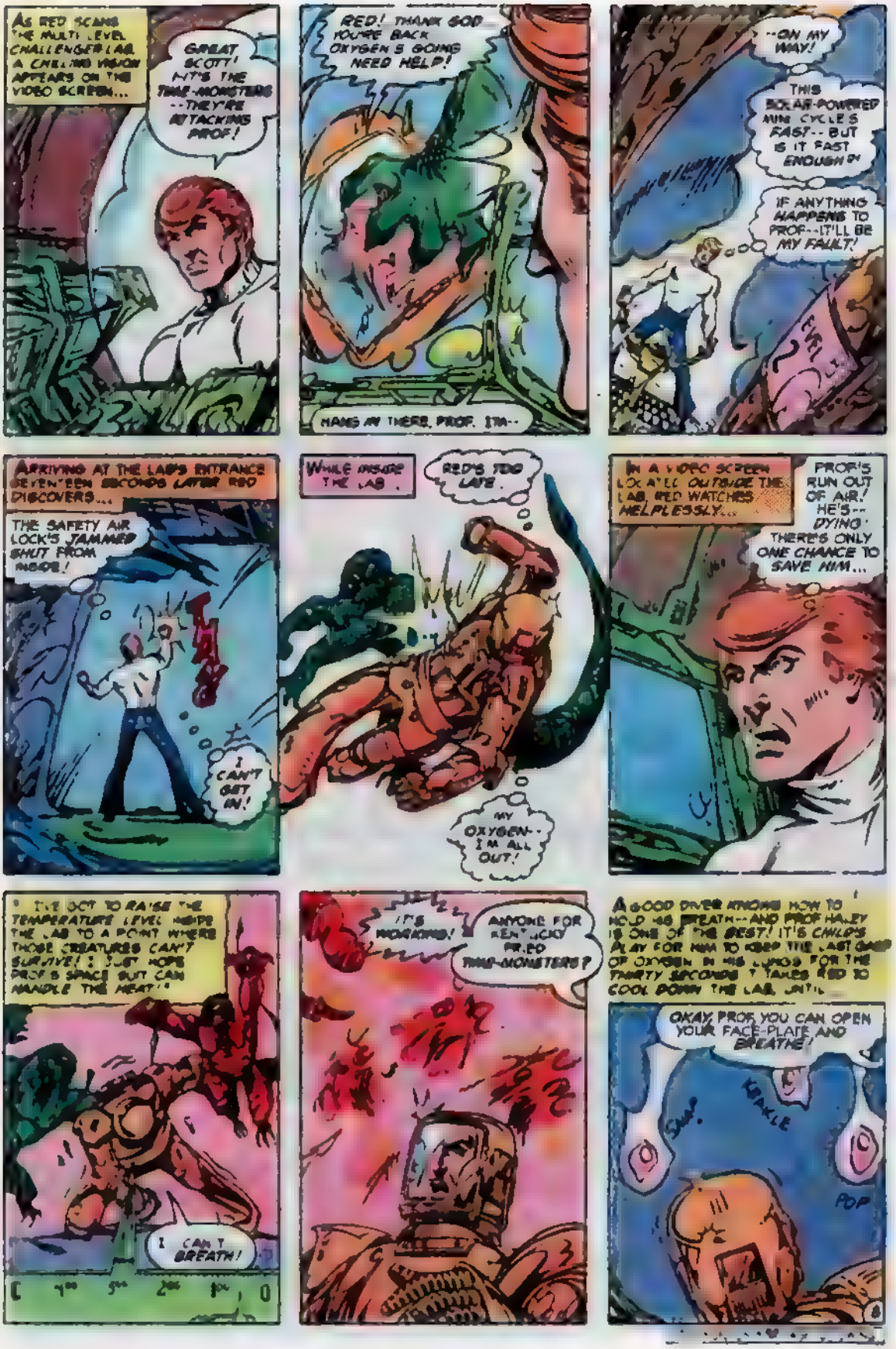
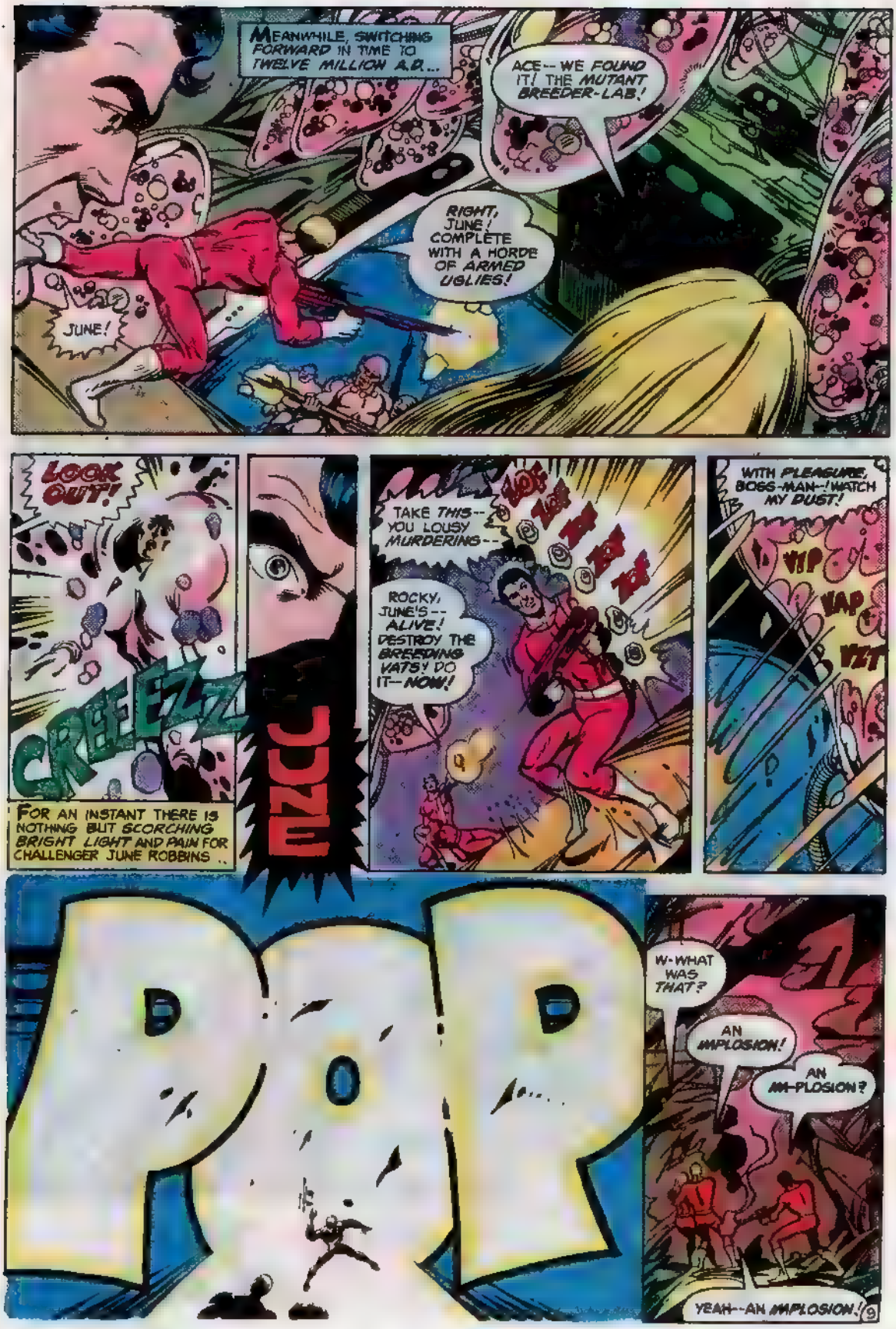
THE CHILLING UNFAMILIAR SOUNDS OF FUTURE-WEAPONS ENGAGED IN BATTLE ECHO THROUGH THE PALACE OF THE SUNSET LORDS, ACCOMPANIED BY THE SCREAMS OF MUTANTS--WOUNDED AND DYING--UNTIL...
THIS ZAPPER'S LOSING POWER!
TZG
ZREEP
SO'S MINE!
VOZ
TRIZK
HOLY HANNAH! WE'RE IN BIG TROUBLE!
OTHER EARS HEAR ACE'S WORDS, AND A HALF-HUMAN HAND TOUCHES HIS SHOULDER, FIRMLY TURNING THE CHALLENGER LEADER AWAY FROM THE BATTLE...
WHO?!
A VOICE RARELY HEARD SPEAKS WITH GREAT DIFFICULTY...
YOU... MUST... GO!... I'LL... STAY!
IN HALTING TONES SWAMP THING REMINDS ACE THAT THERE ARE ERRANDS MORE IMPORTANT THAN THIS BATTLE...
AND SO, MOMENTS LATER, AS THE CHALLENGERS CHARGE OFF TO LOCATE AND DESTROY THE SUNSET LORD'S TIME MACHINE--THEY LEAVE BEHIND THE NOBLE MUCK-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY OF A MAN TO FIGHT ON--ALONE...
I MUST GIVE THE CHALLENGERS ...TIME TO ESCAPE! EVEN IF... IT MEANS MY LIFE!
I HATE LEAVING HOLLAND LIKE THIS! BUT HE'S RIGHT--IF WE DON'T DESTROY THE SUNSET LORD'S TIME MACHINE--FAST!
--IT WON'T MATTER HOW MANY BATTLES WE WIN--WE WON'T HAVE A WORLD TO GO BACK TO!
ARRRH
YOU FELLAS... MAY LOOK MEAN--
--BUT I AM MEAN!
I'VE GOT... A LOT OF PAIN... IN MY HEART... AND I'M GOING TO SHARE SOME OF IT...
...RIGHT... NOW!
HAR
5

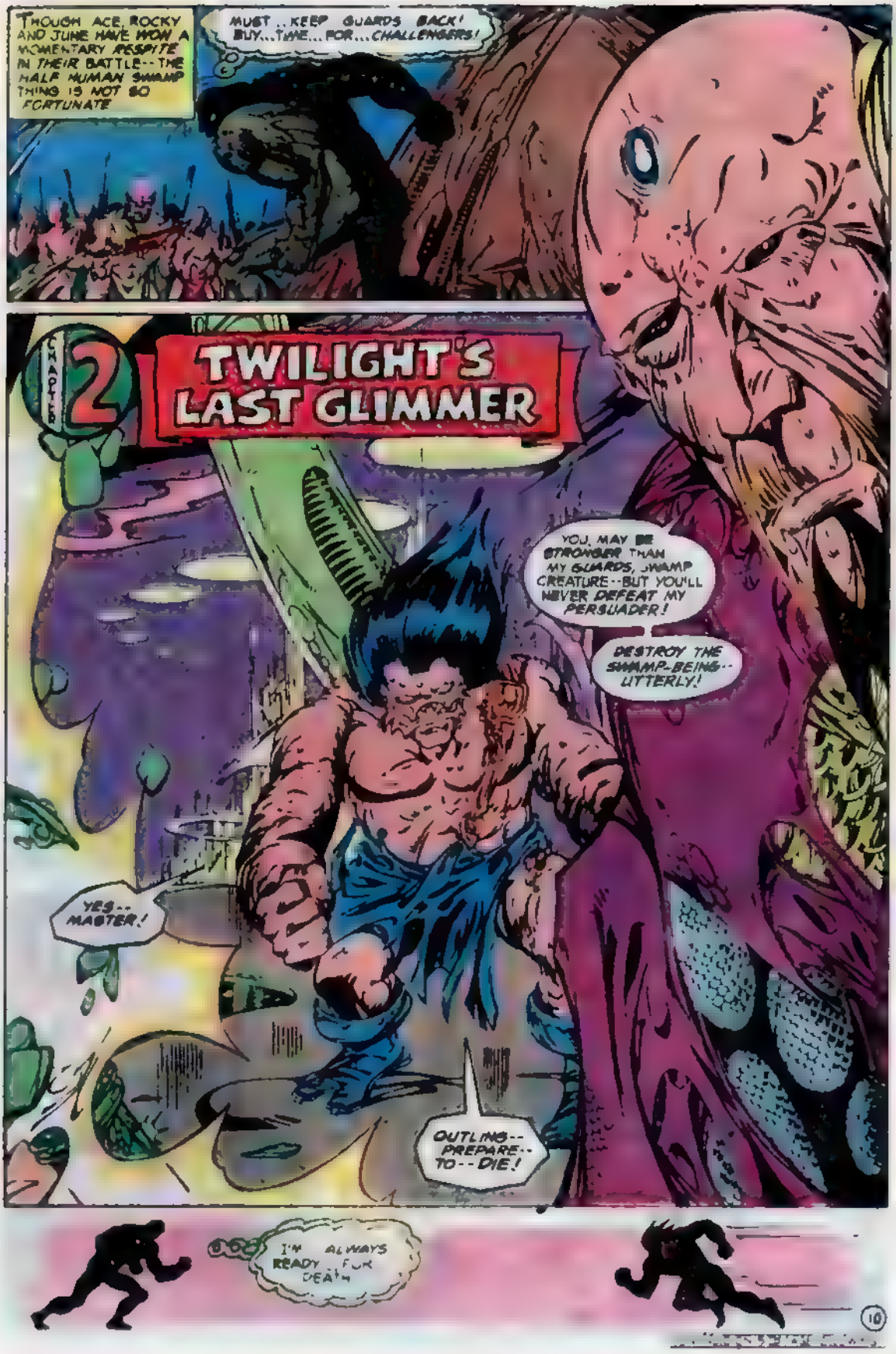

ELSEWHERE, IN OUR TIME PERIOD RYAN SPEEDS A SPECIAL JET HELICOPTER TO CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN, UNAWARE OF WHAT HAS HAPPENED TO HIS FRIENDS...
LOSING MY TEMPER AND QUITTING THE CHALLENGERS WAS ABOUT THE DUMBEST STUNT I'VE EVER PULLED
IT TOOK ME SOME HEAVY THINKING TO REALIZE THAT WHEN A GUY WALKS OUT ON HIS BUDDIES -- NO MATTER WHAT THE REASON-- THE FAULT'S NOT THEIRS--IT'S HIS!"
*R.I.P. OUT THE CHALLENGERS IN ISH #05. --JCH!
MEANWHILE: INSIDE CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN-- A SAVAGE BATTLE RAGES BETWEEN MUTANT CREATURES FROM TWELVE MILLION A.D. AND THE STILL-AWAKENED SCIENTIST, CHALLENGER PROF HALEY"...
THIS EXPERIMENTAL MOTORIZED AND PRESSURIZED SPACE SUIT'S GIVING ME ENOUGH ARTIFICIAL STRENGTH TO FIGHT THESE TIME-MONSTERS--
--BUT MY OXYGEN'S ALMOST GONE! AND WHEN IT GOES-- SO DO I!
KRAKAK
*PROF WAS CURED OF A NEAR-FATAL DISEASE BY DEADMAN IN #85. - JCH.
ARRIVING ON CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN'S LANDING PAD, RED HEARS A SOUND THAT TURNS HIS HOPES OF A HAPPY REUNION INTO FEARS THAT HE'S ARRIVED TOO LATE
THE INTRUDER ALARM!
SOMEONE'S BROKEN INTO CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN!
AREEEE
IT'S NOT A "SOMEONE", RED--IT'S A "SOMETHING"! AND PROF WOULD GLADLY EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENCE-- --IF HE HAD THE TIME.
BWOK
INSIDE THE HANGAR, RED DOES A VISUAL SCAN OF CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN...
THIS REMOTE VIDEO WILL TELL ME WHAT AND WHERE THE TROUBLE IS.
I CAN SEE EVERY ROOM IN THE MOUNTAIN ON THIS GIZMO.
AND SO CAN YOU GOODFOLK, IF YOU GLOM YOUR EYES TO THE NEXT PANEL...

WELCOME TO CHALLENGER MOUNTAIN




AS RED SCANS THE MULTI-LEVEL CHALLENGER LAB, A CHILLING VISION APPEARS ON THE VIDEO SCREEN...
GREAT SCOTT! IT'S THE THAR-MONSTERS --THEY'RE ATTACKING PROF!
RED! THANK GOD YOU'RE BACK OXYGEN'S GOING NEED HELP!
HANG IN THERE, PROF. I'M--
--ON MY WAY!
THIS SOLAR-POWERED MINI CYCLE'S FAST-- BUT IS IT FAST ENOUGH?!
IF ANYTHING HAPPENS TO PROF--IT'LL BE MY FAULT!
ARRIVING AT THE LAB'S ENTRANCE SEVENTEEN SECONDS LATER RED DISCOVERS...
THE SAFETY AIR LOCK'S JAMMED SHUT FROM INSIDE!
I CAN'T GET IN!
WHILE INSIDE THE LAB...
RED'S TOO LATE.
MY OXYGEN-- I'M ALL OUT!
IN A VIDEO SCREEN LOCATED OUTSIDE THE LAB, RED WATCHES HELPLESSLY...
PROF'S RUN OUT OF AIR! HE'S-- DYING! THERE'S ONLY ONE CHANCE TO SAVE HIM...
I'VE GOT TO RAISE THE TEMPERATURE LEVEL INSIDE THE LAB TO A POINT WHERE THOSE CREATURES CAN'T SURVIVE! I JUST HOPE PROF IS SPACE SUIT CAN HANDLE THE HEAT!
I CAN'T BREATH!
IT'S MORGANS!
ANYONE FOR KENTUCKY FRIED THAR-MONSTERS?
A GOOD DIVER KNOWS HOW TO HOLD HIS BREATH--AND PROF HALEY IS ONE OF THE BEST! IT'S CHILPS PLAY FOR HIM TO KEEP THE LAST GASP OF OXYGEN IN HIS LUNGS FOR THE THIRTY SECONDS IT TAKES RED TO COOL DOWN THE LAB UNTIL...
OKAY, PROF, YOU CAN OPEN YOUR FACE-PLATE AND BREATHE!
SNAP
KRAKLE
POP


MEANWHILE, SWITCHING FORWARD IN TIME TO TWELVE MILLION A.D...
ACE -- WE FOUND IT! THE MUTANT BREEDER-LAB!
RIGHT, JUNE! COMPLETE WITH A HORDE OF ARMED UGLIES!
JUNE!
LOOK OUT!
CREEZZ
FOR AN INSTANT THERE IS NOTHING BUT SCORCHING BRIGHT LIGHT AND PAIN FOR CHALLENGER JUNE ROBBINS ..
EZCC
JUNE
TAKE THIS -- YOU LOUSY MURDERING --
ROCKY, JUNE'S -- ALIVE! DESTROY THE BREEDING VATS! DO IT -- NOW!
WITH PLEASURE, BOSS-MAN -- WATCH MY DUST!
VIP
VAP
VZT
POP
W-WHAT WAS THAT?
AN IMPLOSION!
AN IM-PLOSION?
YEAH -- AN IMPLOSION!
9


THOUGH ACE, ROCKY AND JUNE HAVE WON A MOMENTARY RESPITE IN THEIR BATTLE--THE HALF HUMAN SWAMP THING IS NOT SO FORTUNATE
MUST..KEEP GUARDS BACK! BUY...TIME...FOR...CHALLENGERS!
CHAPTER 2
TWILIGHT'S LAST GLIMMER
YOU MAY BE STRONGER THAN MY GUARDS, SWAMP CREATURE--BUT YOU'LL NEVER DEFEAT MY PERSUADER!
DESTROY THE SWAMP-BEING--UTTERLY!
YES--MASTER!
OUTLING--PREPARE--TO--DIE!
I'M ALWAYS READY FOR DEATH

THRABAM

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING.

AN INSTANT LATER, A MUTANT MASS ROCKETS THROUGH THE AIR ON A COLLISION COURSE WITH A TURRET IN THE SUNSET LORD'S PALACE
RAKKA CHAKOOOOOM
THEN AS THE VILLAIN RUSTED HERE TURNS AND HURLS HIS ARMY, A SHRILL VOICE SHRIEKS ON THE WHEEL OF MADNESS-GHOUTS OF A NEW DANGER
YOUR VICTORY IS MEANINGLESS, OUTLANDER!
FOR NO LIVING BEING CAN WITHSTAND A NOVA BLAST FROM MY SUN-STAFF!
SUDDENLY WITHOUT WARNING
THE SUN-STAFF IT'S EXPLODING IN HIS HAND!
THA-BLAAAMM
GREAT SUNSPOTS NO!
A WHITE LIGHT HURLS FORTH THE HEAT AND ENERGY OF A THOUSAND SUNS BEFORE DISSOLVING INTO NOTHING AND REVEAL NO
THE ATTACKING FIGURES OF LUCIFER LANDSPEAR AND HIS SKY-RIDERS!
MASTERS OF MISERY, YOUR REIGN OF BLOOD IS OVER!
MY SKYLANDERS HAVE YOU SURROUNDED! YOU HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO--
--SURRENDER!

AND AS THE REBELS ATTACK WITH A RAGE THAT'S BEEN FORGED BY A MILLENIUM OF OPPRESSION--
RONNKK
I DON'T KNOW WHO...THESE STRANGERS ARE... BUT THANK GOD... THEY'RE ON MY SIDE!
MEANWHILE, IN OUR TIME...
HURRY, RED! WE MUST TRY TO CONTACT THE JLA AGAIN!
--BACK AT THE SITE WHERE MOMENTS AGO STOOD THE MUTANT BREEDER-LAB:
THAT EXPLOSION'S FROM THE PALACE OF THE SUNSET LORDS! WE'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO DR. HOLLAND!
WHOOM
YOU'RE RIGHT, ACE. WE MUST GO NOW! ONLY--
--ROCKY, WHAT'S WRONG?
NUTHIN' KID...
I'M JUST GLAD JUNE'S ALIVE... BUT HOW CAN I TELL HER HOW I FEEL ABOUT HER? CRIPES, I WISH SHE'D PLAY IT SAFE--AND NEVER FIGHT AGAIN!
GO AHEAD, CHALLENGERS!
THANK GOD-- THEY'RE RESPONDING!
AND SO, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF PROF. HALEY AND RED RYAN, THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA LAUNCHES A WORLD-WIDE ATTACK ON THE TIME-MONSTERS FROM ITS SATELLITE HEADQUARTERS--
--AN ATTACK THAT UTILIZES THE KNOWLEDGE GAINED BY BOTH CHALLENGERS, AND ENDS WITH--
VICTORY! WE'VE WON! WE'VE DESTROYED THE TIME-MONSTERS!
BUT WHAT ABOUT MY FRIENDS--
WHASK
14

"--DR HOLLAND--"
LOOK OUT!
THAT SWAMP BEING IS ATTACKING US!
RUN!

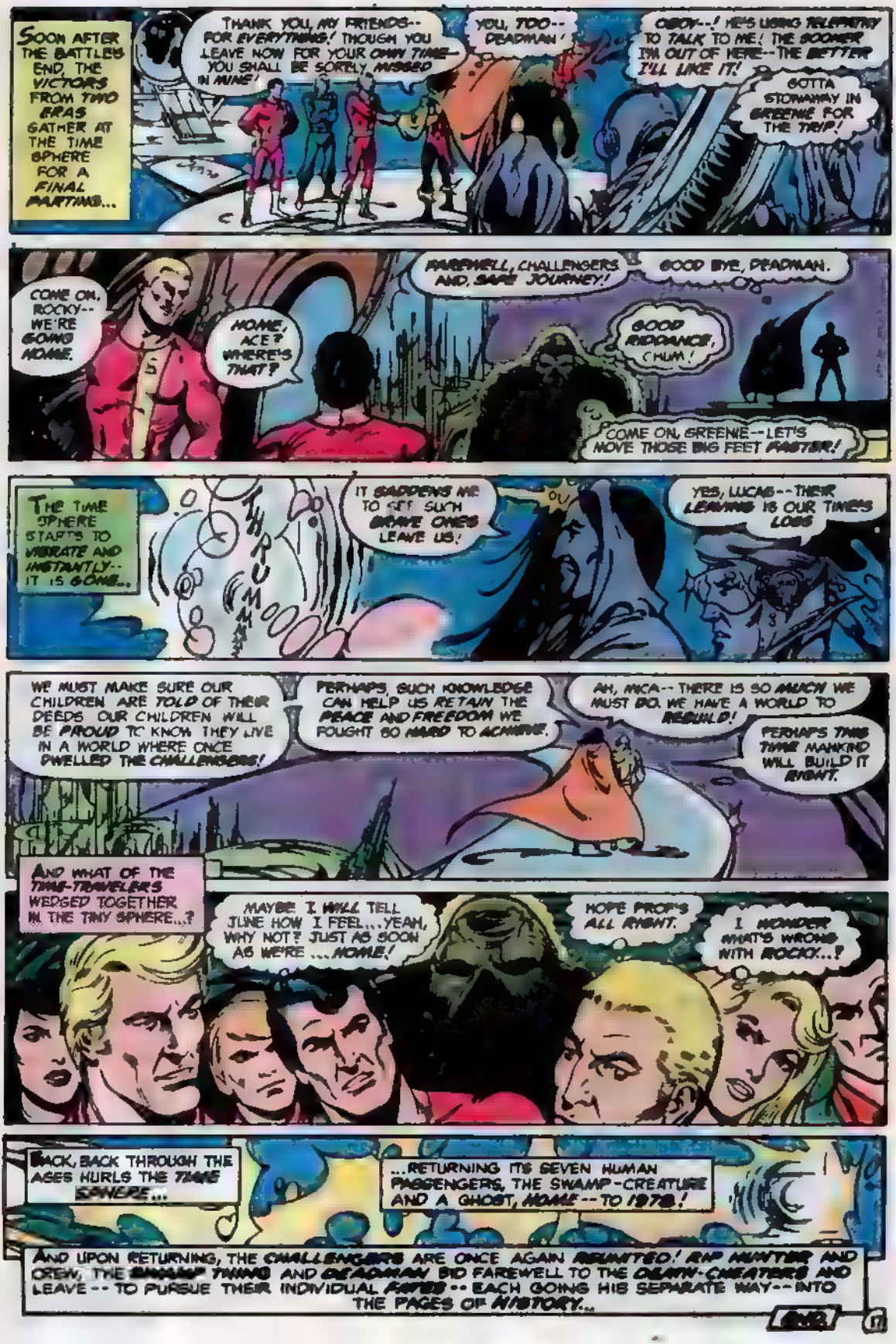
"--ACE ROCKY AND JUNE? WHAT ABOUT THEM?"
WATCH OUT FOR SNIPERS, ROCKY! THEY'RE ALL OVER THE PLACE!
SURE, ACE
GOTTA KEEP AN EYE ON JUNE. I DON'T WANT HER TO GET HURT!
I WONDER WHO THAT STRANGE MAN IS?
MY NAME IS LUCAS LANSPEAKER, JUNE ROBBINS.
ZZOF--
H-HE READ MY MIND!

MY POWERS EXTEND FAR BEYOND TELEPATHY, TIME TRAVELER!
ZZT-
BUT NOT FAR ENOUGH, LANSPEAKER!
HUMMED!

OVER HERE, MY SKY-RIDERS THEY'RE BREAKING RANKS--FLEEING!
EEEEEE

FROM THE SAFETY OF A FORTIFIED TOWER OVERLOOKING THE BATTLE, THE SUNSET LORDS STARE WITH DISBELIEVING EYES AS THEY WITNESS THEIR FIRST--AND FINAL--DEFEAT!
WE ARE--LOSING!
THIS CANNOT BE!
WE MUST DO SOMETHING!
BUT--WHAT?
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING WE CAN DO DESTROY THE CITY!
ARE YOU MAD? WHAT ABOUT US?
WE SHALL SURVIVE. AFTERWARDS, WE MAY RENEW OUR EXPERIMENTS. THIS TOWER IS THE ONLY PLACE IN THE CITY--
--THAT'S SAF--
NOT SO FAST!
ZAK
HUNTER! HOW DID YOU GET IN? WHY AREN'T YOU RESPONDING TO MIND-CONTROL!?
SORRY, STUPID! THAT'S MY SECRET.
BUT NOW--HERE'S SOMETHING YOU CAN UNDERSTAND!
KNNNN
KKKK
I'LL JUST STUN THESE GUYS WITH THIS BLASTER--AND LET LAWSPEAKER DECIDE THEIR FINAL PUNISHMENT.
I'M A DEADMAN--NOT A JUDGE!
OKAY, HUNTER. THE BATTLE'S OVER AND THEY CAN'T CONTROL YOUR MIND ANY LONGER SO IT'S TIME DEADMAN LET YOU THINK FOR YOURSELF!
AT LAST--I'M FREE!... I THINK?!
6

CONCLUDED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING


SOON AFTER THE BATTLE'S END, THE VICTORS FROM TWO ERAS GATHER AT THE TIME SPHERE FOR A FINAL PARTING...
THANK YOU, MY FRIENDS--FOR EVERYTHING! THOUGH YOU LEAVE NOW FOR YOUR OWN TIME--YOU SHALL BE SORELY MISSED IN MINE!
YOU, TOO--DEADMAN!
CHOV--! HE'S USING TELEPATHY TO TALK TO ME! THE SOONER I'M OUT OF HERE--THE BETTER I'LL LIKE IT!
GOTTA STOWAWAY IN GREENIE FOR THE TRIP!
COME ON, ROCKY--WE'RE GOING HOME.
HOME, ACE? WHERE'S THAT?
FAREWELL, CHALLENGERS AND, SAFE JOURNEY!
GOOD BYE, DEADMAN.
GOOD RIDDANCE, CHUM!
COME ON, GREENIE--LET'S MOVE THOSE BIG FEET FASTER!
THE TIME SPHERE STARTS TO VIBRATE AND INSTANTLY--IT IS GONE...
THRUMMM
IT SADDENS ME TO SEE SUCH BRAVE ONES LEAVE US!
OH!
YES, LUCAS--THEIR LEAVING IS OUR TIME'S LOSS
WE MUST MAKE SURE OUR CHILDREN ARE TOLD OF THEIR DEEDS OUR CHILDREN WILL BE PROUD TO KNOW THEY LIVE IN A WORLD WHERE ONCE DWELLED THE CHALLENGERS!
PERHAPS, SUCH KNOWLEDGE CAN HELP US RETAIN THE PEACE AND FREEDOM WE FOUGHT SO HARD TO ACHIEVE.
AH, INCA--THERE IS SO MUCH WE MUST DO. WE HAVE A WORLD TO REBUILD!
PERHAPS THIS TIME MANKIND WILL BUILD IT RIGHT.
AND WHAT OF THE TIME-TRAVELERS WEDGED TOGETHER IN THE TINY SPHERE...?
MAYBE I WILL TELL JUNE HOW I FEEL...YEAH, WHY NOT? JUST AS SOON AS WE'RE ...HOME!
HOPE PROP'S ALL RIGHT.
I WONDER WHAT'S WRONG WITH ROCKY...?
BACK, BACK THROUGH THE AGES HURLS THE TIME SPHERE...
...RETURNING ITS SEVEN HUMAN PASSENGERS, THE SWAMP-CREATURE AND A GHOST, HOME--TO 1978!
AND UPON RETURNING, THE CHALLENGERS ARE ONCE AGAIN REUNITED! RAP HUNTER AND CREW, THE [illegible] AND DEADMAN BID FAREWELL TO THE CRIME-CHEATERS AND LEAVE--TO PURSUE THEIR INDIVIDUAL FATES--EACH GOING HIS SEPARATE WAY--INTO THE PAGES OF HISTORY...
END
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WATCH OUT! LOCK YOUR DOORS! BOLT YOUR WINDOWS!
THE MARSHLAND MONSTERS ARE COMING!
ALL NEW!
DC COMICS PRESENTS
NOW 40¢
NO. 6
APR.
SUPERMAN AND SWAMP THING
YOU'VE ALWAYS BEEN ON THE SIDE OF GOOD, SWAMP THING--
--SO WHY ARE YOU HELPING SOLOMON GRUNDY DESTROY ME?
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

AS DAY GIVES WAY TO AN EARLY WINTER'S EVE, TWO BEINGS PROWL A STARK AND BUNDLED METROPOLIS — TWO BEINGS, ODDLY ENOUGH, WITH A GREAT DEAL IN COMMON!

FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD, A MAN BORN OF NO EARTHWOMAN IS SEARCHING FOR A GRIM AND GHASTLY MONSTER! BREATHTAKINGLY DIFFERENT FROM ANY OTHER BEING ON THIS PLANET, HE'LL NEED EVERY OUNCE OF HIS ALIEN STRENGTH IF HE SUCCEEDS!

HE IS THE MAN OF STEEL-- THE MAN OF TOMORROW--

SUPERMAN

WHILE EQUALLY FAR FROM THE CROWD--IN THE SEWERS 'NEATH THEIR FEET--A CREATURE BORN OF SCIENCE AND THE SWAMP SEEKS THE SAME MONSTER! SUFFOCATINGLY DIFFERENT, HE, TOO, WILL NEED EVERY OUNCE OF HIS ARCANE POWER IF HE SUCCEEDS!

HE WAS ONCE A MAN--SOMETIMES, IT SEEMS LIKE ONLY YESTERDAY! BUT NOW, HE IS NOTHING BUT THE--

SWAMP THING!

YES, THESE TWO HAVE MUCH IN COMMON! BUT TONIGHT, IT IS THAT WHICH DIVIDES THEM THAT WILL SEE—

"THE SIXTY DEATHS of SOLOMON GRUNDY!"

STEVE ENGLEHART / WRITER — MURPHY ANDERSON / ARTIST — BEN ODA / LETTERER — JERRY SERPE / COLORIST — JULIUS SCHWARTZ / EDITOR

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HE *REMEMBERS*, AS HE SHAMBLES DOWN THE FILTH-ENCRUSTED CORRIDORS, SLOPPING THROUGH A CITY'S MURKY *LEAVINGS*...

HE *REMEMBERS*, TRAPPED INSIDE THIS MISSHAPEN MOCKERY OF A FORM, ABLE TO SPEAK ONLY THE MOST PAINFUL GUTTERALS, THE *SWAMP THING* CAN DO LITTLE ELSE BUT REMEMBER...

OVER AND OVER AGAIN, IN THE SMALL DARKENED THEATER OF HIS UNCHANGED MIND...

...HE *REMEMBERS*...

...THE *EXPLOSION*, THAT SENT HIM REELING FROM HIS LAB IN *SHRIEKING PAIN*, AT THE EMBRACE OF BOTH FLAME AND COUNTLESS VITRIOLIC CHEMICALS...

...THE *SWAMP* INTO WHOSE SLIME HE COMMENDED HIS FRAGILE SPIRIT...

...THE *NIGHTMARE*, MADE OF MOSS, AND PEAT, AND ROOT, WHICH ROSE FROM THE MIRE LIKE AN ERUPTION OF FETID SWAMP GAS...

...AND THE *SEARCH* HE BEGAN THAT NIGHT, FOR A MEANS OF RESTORING HIMSELF TO *HIMSELF*... AND THE *WORLD*...

TWO WEEKS AGO, THE SEARCH LED HIM TO A YELLOWING NEWSPAPER, MONTHS OUT OF DATE...

DAILY PLANET

SUPERMAN ATTACKED BY "MARSHLAND MONSTER"

Solomon Grundy strikes from Metropolis sewers

...AND *THAT*, AT THE BEST SPEED HE COULD MANAGE, HAS LED HIM *HERE*...

SOMETHING IN THESE *WASTES*... RECREATED A MURDEROUS MONSTER WHO... WHO ORIGINALLY WAS SPAWNED... IN A *SWAMP*...!

IF I CAN FIND... SOMETHING... TO ANALYZE...

...SOMETHING TO TELL ME *NOW*... AND *WHY*... SUCH THINGS CAN HAPPEN...

... SOMETHING ...

:URRGH!:

SOLOMON GRUNDY... HIMSELF...!

THEN... IT'S HAPPENED AGAIN..! AND I...

...I HAVE THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME...! I CAN EXAMINE A... LIVING CREATURE, AND...

HELLO, SOLOMON... SO IT *IS* YOU!

I THOUGHT THAT ATTACK ON THE "A" TRAIN THIS AFTERNOON SOUNDED LIKE YOUR WORK!

GOOD LORD! SUPERMAN!

HUH! TWO LITTLE MEN FOR GRUNDY TO KILL!

TWO--?!

AND SUDDENLY FROM THE SHADOWS--

NO! SUPERMAN CAN'T HAVE HIM...!

HE'LL TAKE HIM... WHERE I CAN'T GO...!

WHA...? THE SWAMP THING!

GET BACK, NOW! SETTLE DOWN, BIG FELLA!

HE MUST BE HIDING DOWN HERE, POOR CREATURE! ATTACK SAYS HE'S DANGEROUS, BUT THE BATMAN TELLS ME DIFFERENT--AND BRUCE'S WORD IS GOOD ENOUGH FOR ME!

I HOPE I CAN GET THROUGH TO HIM!

BUT IN THAT FATAL MOMENT OF INATTENTION--

GRUNDY WILL KILL!

WHAM!

SORRY SUPERMAN... SORRY...!

GET OFF ME, BLAST YOU!

WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH YOU?

TUNK!

MAN! I KILL BLUE MAN!

THE ORIGINAL SOLOMON GRUNDY OF EARTH-TWO WAS AN EASY MATCH FOR ME, BUT THIS VERSION FROM OUR EARTH IS STRONG ENOUGH TO CARRY OUT HIS THREAT!

SWAMP THING! I DON'T WANT TO HURT YOU—

--BUT I HAVE TO GET FREE!

UUHH! DIDN'T MEAN TO DO THAT! BUT IT DOESN'T SEEM TO HURT HIM!

HOW GRUNDY-!

KRAM!

BLUM!

KRAK!

GRUNDY WILL KILL!

MY GOD! HE DIDN'T REALLY...

I DIDN'T WANT...

NO! SUPERMAN'S ALL RIGHT...!

UNCONSCIOUS...! LORD, I DIDN'T KNOW... ANYONE COULD DO THAT...!

UNCONSCIOUS...

...BUT ALIVE...!

ALIVE IS WHAT COUNTS...! AND IT'S UP TO ME... TO SEE HE STAYS THAT WAY...!

COME!

THE HARSH WORD BURSTS ITSELF FROM THE BOSS-BOUND THROAT IN A CONVULSIVE EFFORT...

BUT IT HAS ITS DESIRED EFFECT...

YOU ARE NOT MAN!

YOU ARE DIFFERENT-- LIKE GRUNDY!

YOU HELP GRUNDY!

GRUNDY WILL COME!

UUUGHH!

GREAT RAO! I'M LUCKY TO STILL BE IN ONE PIECE...

THIS TIME IT'S *KILL OR BE KILLED*, FOR SOLOMON GRUNDY--AND MAYBE THE *SWAMP THING*, TOO!

SOMEWHERE, DEEP IN THE BOWELS OF THE *LABYRINTH*...

HERE...! IN *HERE*...!

IT'S RUDIMENTARY... BUT IT'S ENOUGH...!

I HAVEN'T FORGOTTEN ... MY CHEMICAL TRAINING... AND MY DEXTERITY IN THIS BODY... HAS GROWN OVER THE MONTHS...!

IF ONLY I CAN COMPLETE MY EXPERIMENTS WITH GRUNDY... BEFORE *SUPERMAN* FINDS US...!

WHAT IS THIS PLACE, GREEN THING?

GRUNDY IS *LOST!*

BUT THE *SWAMP THING'S* SOLE REPLY ISSUES FROM HIS GLOWING *EYES*...

CAN'T TALK GOOD, HUH?

NO WORRY! GRUNDY IS LIKE THAT, TOO, SOMETIMES! I GO AWAY-- COME BACK-- BUT EACH TIME *STRONGER!*

HOW IS YOUR ARM?

HUH! GROWING BACK!?

YES... THE ONLY GOOD THING ABOUT THIS BODY... EXCEPT FOR ITS *STRENGTH!*

BUT NOW... DOWN TO BUSINESS...!

GRRRRR!

LITTLE ANIMALS!

SOLOMON GRUNDY *HATES* LITTLE ANIMALS! THEY BITE HIS *FEET!*

SOMEHOW... I HAVE TO *CONVINCE* THAT *HOMICIDAL MONSTER*... TO LET ME HAVE A *PIECE*... OF HIS *SKIN*...!

WITHIN THAT MOSS-DAMP FORM DWELLS A MIND OF HIGH INTELLIGENCE... YET WITH ONLY *PANTOMIME* AT ITS DISPOSAL, IT TAKES ALL THE SKILL IT CAN MUSTER TO MAKE THE MAN-BRUTE UNDERSTAND...

AND WHEN HE *DOES*...

CUT GRUNDY? YOU WANT TO *CUT* GRUNDY?

GRUNDY WILL KILL!!

NO! YOU ARE *FRIEND!*

YOU AND GRUNDY ARE *DIFFERENT TOGETHER!*

CAN'T KILL *FRIEND!*

AND SO THE *SWAMP THING* TAKES THE FIRST STEP DOWN THE ROAD THAT MAY WELL LEAD TO HIS SALVATION...

THIS WAY, TOO... I KEEP GRUNDY WHERE I CAN WATCH HIM... AND MAYBE *CONTROL* HIM...

...SO TAKING HIM FROM *SUPERMAN* ... WON'T HAVE CAUSED ANY REAL PROBLEMS...!

BUT, IN THE EVER-PRESENT *SHADOWS*...

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CONTINUED ON 3 BY PAGE FOLLOWING

MEANWHILE (SPEAKING OF SHADOWS)--

...ALL I CAN TELL YOU IS THAT I TRUSTED HIM!

WELL, YOU'RE NOTHING IF NOT SURE OF YOUR JUDGMENTS, BATMAN -- BUT I WISH YOU COULD EXPLAIN WHY HE ATTACKED ME!

FOR YOU, I'LL GIVE HIM THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT IF I RUN INTO HIM AGAIN -- BUT I WON'T TURN MY BACK ON HIM!

SEE YOU SOON!

SUPERMAN!

EVENING, DR. KLYBURN! I'M SORRY TO HAVE CALLED YOU OUT OF A SOUND SLEEP LIKE THIS!

NONSENSE! ANYTHING S.T.A.R.* CAN DO FOR YOU, WE'RE ONLY TOO GLAD TO BE ASKED!

THIS THE SAMPLE?

*SCIENTIFIC AND TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCED RESEARCH.-- Julie

RIGHT! I TOOK IT FROM THE POOL WHERE I FOUND GRUNDY!

I THOUGHT, AFTER THE FIRST TIME GRUNDY'S SLAUGHTER SWAMP BLIGHT GENERATED A DUPLICATE IN OUR SEWERS, WE'D SEEN THE END OF THAT MENACE -- BUT THE SUBWAY ATTACK THIS AFTERNOON SHOWED ME OTHERWISE!

A CONTINUING CHEMICAL REACTION IS GOING ON DOWN THERE, AND I WANT TO KNOW HOW TO STOP IT!

I'M THE LADY TO TELL YOU, SUPERMAN! WE'LL GET RIGHT ON IT!

SUPERMAN!

OH, HI, LOIS--!

LOIS! IS THAT A NEW DRESS?

AH! YOU NOTICED -- NOW I'M SURE YOU'RE PAYING SOME ATTENTION TO ME!

I'LL GIVE YOU *MORE* EVIDENCE IF YOU LIKE--!

WHOA! DON'T YOU DARE TOUCH THIS NEW OUTFIT TILL YOU'VE CLEANED UP!

I HEARD ABOUT THAT BATTLE IN THE *SEWERS*--AND MY *NOSE* TELLS ME THE *MEMORY* STILL *CLINGS!*

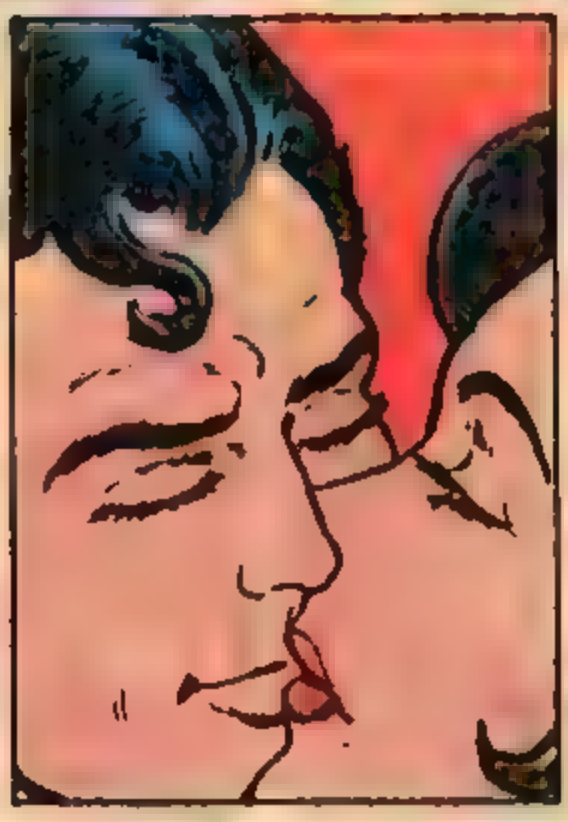
LOOK--SOON AS I WRAP UP THIS CASE, I'LL FLY THROUGH THE *SUN* TO *DRY-CLEAN* MYSELF... THEN...

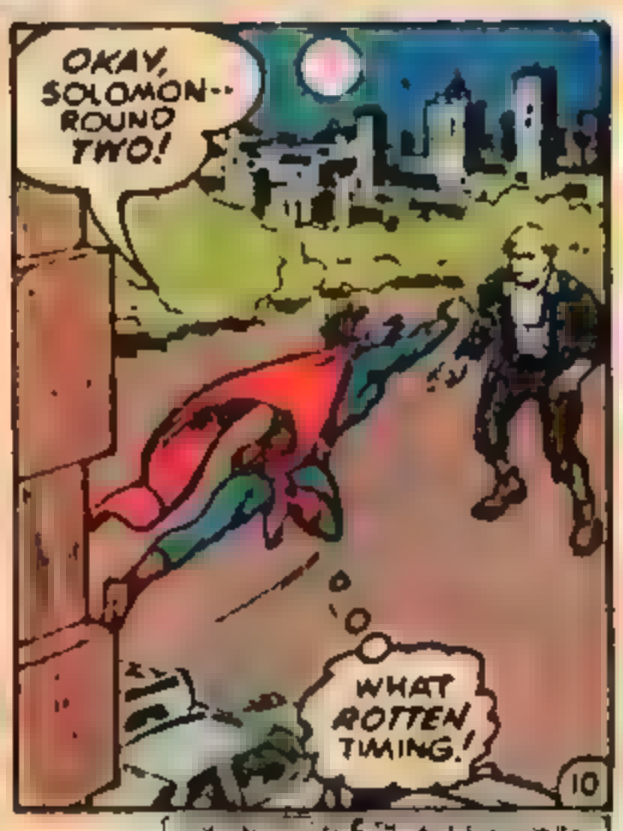
NOW YOU'RE GETTING TO THE *INTERESTING* PART!

S-S-SUPERMAN!

WHAT IS IT *NOW?*

S-S-SOLOMON GRUNDY!





THERE ARE SOME HEROES WHO WOULD *DIE* FOR THEIR WORK-- WHO WOULD CHOOSE IT OVER *EVERYTHING ELSE*, INCLUDING ANY WOMAN!

THE *MAN OF STEEL* USED TO BE ONE OF THEM!

SLAM

MY RIGHT HAND OWES YOU *THIS* ONE, GRUNDY--

--AND *THIS* ONE PUTS US *EVEN*!

CLUD

:GRRRR!:

GRUNDY WILL *KILL*!

HE MOVES WITH SUCH FRENZIED JERKS--!

STAND *STILL*, LITTLE MAN!

YOU TOOK SOLOMON GRUNDY'S *SWAMP WATER*!

YOU *HURT* SOLOMON GRUNDY!

KRA-BAM!

SOLOMON GRUNDY WILL KILL YOU *BAD*!

SOLOMON GRUNDY WILL--

--WHERE YOU GO?

LIKE SOME MASSIVE SHOOTING STAR, *SUPERMAN* HURTLES THROUGH THE HEAVENS--

I'VE GOT TO STOP KIDDING AROUND WITH THIS MONSTROSITY!

HE'S AS STRONG AS I AM, NO TWO WAYS ABOUT IT!

GOT TO THROW ALL *GRAVITY* AND I HAVE INTO ONE PUNCH--

--AND IF *THAT* DOESN'T WORK--

KRWHOMM

GRUNDY... WILL... KILL...

FIRST THE *INTELLIGENCE* GOES...

.. AND ONLY *THEN* THE *BODY!*

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

I KNOW THAT THING ISN'T *REALLY ALIVE* -- THAT IT'S SOME SORT OF *DISTORTED WEIRDNESS!*

WHATEVER IT IS, IT WOULD HAVE *DESTROYED METROPOLIS* IF I HADN'T STOPPED IT!

I'M REALLY GLAD THAT'S OVER!

"NOW I JUST HAVE THE *OTHER ONE* TO DEAL WITH --

"--THE *SWAMP THING!*"

IT'S NO USE...! THERE'S *NO...* *RESEMBLANCE...!*

YOU'RE NO USE TO ME... SOLOMON GRUNDY...!

IT TOOK ME.. SIX HOURS... TO FIND OUT... YOU'RE NOT EVEN *TRULY ALIVE!*

GRUNDY CAN GO NOW? YOU DO NOT TALK TO GRUNDY?

GRUNDY WANTS --

HUM..?!

--AND THE BODY OF SOLOMON GRUNDY WAS BURIED JUST *HOURS AGO* IN THE *EVERGLADES*-- A RESTING PLACE *SUPERMAN* CHOSE--

THE MAN OF STEEL STATED: "I TAKE *FULL RESPONSIBILITY* FOR THE PROBLEM! I HAD THOUGHT THE SEWERS COULD ONLY CREATE *ONE* SUCH CREATURE! I WAS WRONG!

"BUT—THE S.T.A.R. LABS ARE WORKING ON A PERMANENT REMEDY, SO IT WON'T EVER HAPPEN AGAIN!"

WHAT..? ANOTHER GRUNDY..?

!GRRRR!

HE DOESN'T *LIKE* THAT...!

DON'T...

SLURK

A RAGING ENGINE OF DEATH, THE MARSHLAND MONSTER STALKS OUT TO WREAK HIS VENGEANCE ON THE WORLD THAT PLAYS SUCH TRICKS ON HIM!

HE WILL *KILL*!

KILL! KILL!!

KILL!!!

¡GRRRR!!

¡GRRRR!!

OH, MY GOD!

MOONS OF KRYPTON! MORE OF THEM!

LET'S GET TO THE *LAB*, LOIS! WE NEED THAT REMEDY NOW!

BUT.. THERE ARE SO MANY OF THEM -- *FIFTY*-- *SIXTY*--!

YOU CAN'T FIGHT THEM *ALL*!

I *CAN* IF THE *ANTIDOTE'S* READY!

DOCTOR KLYBURN--?

I THINK WE'RE ABOUT *SET*, SUPERMAN! JUST A FEW *MORE* MINUTES!

WE MAY NOT HAVE A FEW MORE MINUTES, DOCTOR! THE SWAMP BLIGHT HAS GONE OUT OF CONTROL!

DON'T WORRY, SUPERMAN! I PROMISE YOU THIS WILL WORK!

NO MATTER HOW MUCH PSEUDO-LIFE HAS BEEN SPAWNED DOWN THERE, YOU'LL BE ABLE TO DESTROY IT ALL!

WHAT--?

NO!

DON'T DESTROY THEM...! CAGE THEM... PUT THEM ON ANOTHER PLANET... BUT DON'T SNUFF THEM OUT!

THEY'RE NOT ALIVE... AS WE KNOW 'LIFE... BUT SOMETHING STIRS THEM...!

HAVE TO STOP HIM... STOP SUPERMAN...!

NOT EVEN A MONSTER ...WANTS TO DIE...!

ONE MIGHT SAY THE SWAMP THING IS BIASED, BUT WHO COULD GAINSAY HIS RIGHT TO BE?

HE KNOWS WHAT A PRECIOUS GIFT LIFE IS... RECALLS HOW MUCH IT MEANS TO KEEP HOLD OF IT...

HE IS AS CERTAIN OF THE QUALITY OF MERCY...

...AS THOSE WHO GUARD SOCIETY ARE CERTAIN OF THEIR JUSTICE!

HERE, SUPERMAN! PUT AN END TO THOSE MURDEROUS MARAUDERS!

THANKS, DOCTOR KLEIN!

CAN'T GO.. ANY FASTER..!

HAVE TO TRY TO YELL..!

AND WITH DUSTY'S STRAIN, HE SUCCEEDS..

WHOOOSH!

BUT NO ONE HEARS...

WHO IS RIGHT? IT IS AN ANCIENT QUESTION... AN ETERNAL QUESTION...

..AND IT WILL NOT BE RESOLVED THIS NIGHT!

THAT'S TAKING CARE OF THEM! WITH LUCK, THE ONLY DAMAGE WILL BE A FEW WRECKED CARS AND SHOPS!

IT DOES SLOW ME DOWN A LITTLE TACKLING ALL THESE GRENDELS ONE-BY-ONE..

..BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO HURT THE SWAMP THING BY MISTAKE!

MAYBE I'LL BE ABLE TO HELP HIM SOME DAY..!

SOME DAY, PERHAPS..

BUT NOT TONIGHT!

FOR LEN, BERNI & JOE

NEXT ISSUE! SUPERMAN AND WONDER WOMAN IN A TITANIC TEAM-UP TO STAVE OFF "THE INVASION OF THE ICE PEOPLE!"

THE ON-SALE DATE: FEBRUARY 8TH!

DC
the BRAVE and the BOLD
50¢
ALL NEW!
NO. 176
JULY
STARRING
BATMAN
AND
SWAMP THING
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
MIKE KALUTA '80
DEATH IN THE HEART OF THE SWAMP...
MORE NEW PAGES FROM THE NEW
DC

WHEN A GUNMAN MURDERED HIS PARENTS, BRUCE WAYNE TRAINED HIMSELF TO WAGE WAR ON ALL CRIMINALS! NOW THE DARKNIGHT DETECTIVE JOINS FORCES WITH A SHAMBLING, MUCK-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY OF LIFE TO BECOME...
the BRAVE and the BOLD
BAT MAN and SWAMP THING
SHE WAS STILL A PART OF HIS LIFE THEN, LITTLE REALIZING HOW HER PAST AND FAMILY WOULD CREATE SUCH HORRORS FOR...
ENDPOINTS: A TINY, FILTHY ROOM IN A FLEABAG HOTEL--THE KIND OF PLACE WHERE LUCK ALWAYS RUNS OUT...
MURDERED, BATMAN--LOOKS LIKE A PROFESSIONAL JOB, TOO!
AND DEEP IN THIS RAIN-PELTED SWAMP, AN ENDPOINT HAS BEEN REACHED BY A CERTAIN MOSSY MAN-BRUTE AS WELL...
...THE KIND OF POINT YOU REACH WHEN THERE'S NO PLACE LEFT TO RUN TO.
THEY ARE POINTS ON A LINE LEADING TO TERROR AND TRAGEDY... BUT PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANTLY--TO NEW BEGINNINGS!
"THE DELTA CONNECTION!"
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OUTSIDE THE HOTEL, THE TIRED NEON SIGN STILL FLASHES, WASHING THE ROOM IN INTERMITTENT CRIMSON. IF THERE ARE ROOMS IN HELL, THEY NO DOUBT LOOK LIKE THIS ONE.
HOTEL IMPERIAL
THUS IT GAVE ITS OCCUPANT--WHOSE LIFE WENT THE WAY OF HIS LUCK--AN UNOFFICIAL PREVIEW OF HIS FINAL DESTINATION...
WE CAN'T BE SURE TILL THE CORONER DOES HIS AUTOPSY--BUT IT LOOKS LIKE THIS GUY WAS KNOCKED OUT...
...THEN INJECTED WITH A FAST-ACTING POISON!
YES--I SEE A SMALL SWELLING AT THE BASE OF THE SKULL--PROBABLY WHERE THE NEEDLE WENT IN!
VERY "CLEAN" JOB!
YOU'RE RIGHT--IT DOES LOOK LIKE THE WORK OF A PRO!
DOESN'T FIT ANY M.O. I'M FAMILIAR WITH, THOUGH! ANY I.D. ON THE BODY, LIEUTENANT?
WE MAKE HIM AS A SMALL-TIME BOX ARTIST*--RETIRED!
A SAFE-CRACKER--Paul
NAME'S ALBERT COWPER! RING ANY BELLS, BATMAN?
LAST I HEARD OF HIM HE WAS A SUSPECT IN THAT DIAMOND JOB AT THE GOTHAM GEM EXPOSITION TWO YEARS AGO!
D.A. COULDN'T GET AN INDICTMENT, THOUGH... INSUFFICIENT EVIDENCE!
WELL, THERE'S NOTHING MORE I CAN DO HERE! WE'LL KEEP IN TOUCH, LIEUTENANT!
MEANTIME, I'LL START DIGGING!
--STARTING WITH TRYING TO GET A PROFILE OF WHAT COWPER'S BEEN DOING THESE PAST TWO YEARS!
AND UNTIL THE CORONER'S REPORT COMES IN, I'LL WANT TO CAREFULLY EXAMINE ALL OF COWPER'S MUG SHOTS!
THERE WAS SOMETHING ON HIS FACE... AND IF IT WASN'T THERE BEFORE HE DIED, IT COULD BE AN IMPORTANT CLUE!
2

FIRST, I'LL CHECK MY COMPUTERIZED FILES IN THE BATCAVE UNDER THE WAYNE FOUNDATION BUILDING--!
I'M SORRY, MS. KYLE, BUT I CANNOT SAY WHEN MASTER BRUCE WILL RETURN!
THAT'S ALL RIGHT, ALFRED-- HE WASN'T EXPECTING ME!
WHAT'S WRONG, SELINA? YOU SEEM UPSET!
OH, BRUCE--YOU'RE BACK! YES, IT'S MY SISTER--
SISTER? I DIDN'T KNOW YOU HAD ONE!
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO! FELICIA'S IN PRISON--I HAVEN'T SEEN HER IN YEARS!
WHEN I LEFT THE CRIMINAL PART OF MY LIFE BEHIND, I GUESS I...I DISOWNED HER, TOO!
BUT EVEN THOUGH I'M CLEAN NOW, PIECES OF THE CATWOMAN'S PAST HAVE A WAY OF RESURFACING--
--AND NEWS I DON'T WANT TO HEAR FINDS ITS WAY TO ME ANYHOW! MAYBE THAT'S WHY I'M HERE--
--BECAUSE I NEED A FRIEND NOW... TO HELP ME FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO!
I THINK MY SISTER'S LIFE IS IN DANGER!
SHE'S IN THE ATCHAFALAYA STATE PRISON IN LOUISIANA! THE WORD ON THE STREET IS THAT A HIRED KILLER WILL SOON POSE AS A GUARD THERE...
...AND MURDER HER WHILE "ON THE INSIDE"! I CAN'T TELL YOU WHY!
THEN GO TO THE AUTHORITIES-- THEY'LL PROTECT HER! YOU'VE NO REASON TO FEAR THEM ANY MORE!
PERHAPS... BUT WHENEVER I CONFIDE IN YOU, BRUCE, THE BATMAN ALWAYS FINDS OUT SOMEHOW...
...AND THAT'S THE REAL REASON I CAME HERE!
ONLY THE BATMAN CAN HELP MY SISTER NOW!
I WISH I COULD'VE TOLD YOU THE WHOLE TRUTH, BRUCE, MY LOVE-- BUT IF I HAD...
...YOU'D ONLY END UP LIKE POOR AL COOPER!

TURN TIME AHEAD SEVERAL HOURS TO... BAYOU LAFOURCHE:
THEY SAY MAN WAS NOT MEANT TO LIVE HERE-- AMONG THE THINGS THAT CRAWL OR SWIM OR SLITHER THROUGH THE STAGNANT MIRE.
STILL, MEN DO.
BUT WHEN MOTHER NATURE WEEPS-- AS SHE DOES THIS NIGHT--AND HER TEARS CHURN THE BRACKISH WATER AND THREATEN TO DISTURB ITS UNSEEN DENIZENS...
...EVEN THE CAJUNS WHO HAVE DWELT HERE DEFIANTLY FOR GENERATIONS CAN BE CONVINCED-- IF FOR ONLY A MOMENT-- THAT MOTHER NATURE DISAPPROVES...
YOU'RE SURE IT'S NO TROUBLE PUTTING ME UP FOR THE NIGHT, MR. THIBODAUX?
I SAID NOT, DIDN'T I? AN' IF YA DO DECIDE TO STAY ON AN' HELP WITH THE CRAWFISHIN' COME DAYBREAK, I COULD USE THE EXTRA MAN!
AN' MR. TRALLER --WHAT SAY I BE LUBIN AN' YOU BE CALVIN?
FINE BY ME... LUBIN!
SO...YOU CLOSE UP ZE BAR IN TOWN AGAIN, EH, MY SON? MON DIEU, LUBIN, 'AVE YOU NO IDEA OF ZE HOUR?
OUI, MAMAN-- BUT DO YOU?
I COULD NOT SLEEP!
ZE PRISON-BREAK--AN' ZE POWER-FAILURE -- ZEY 'AVE WORRIED ME!
YOU BREENG A FRIEN', I SEE, LUBIN?
TRALLER'S MY NAME, MA'AM-- CALVIN TRALLER!
WE GOT THE ATCHAFALAYA STATE PRISON DOWN 'ROUND HERE, CALVIN--

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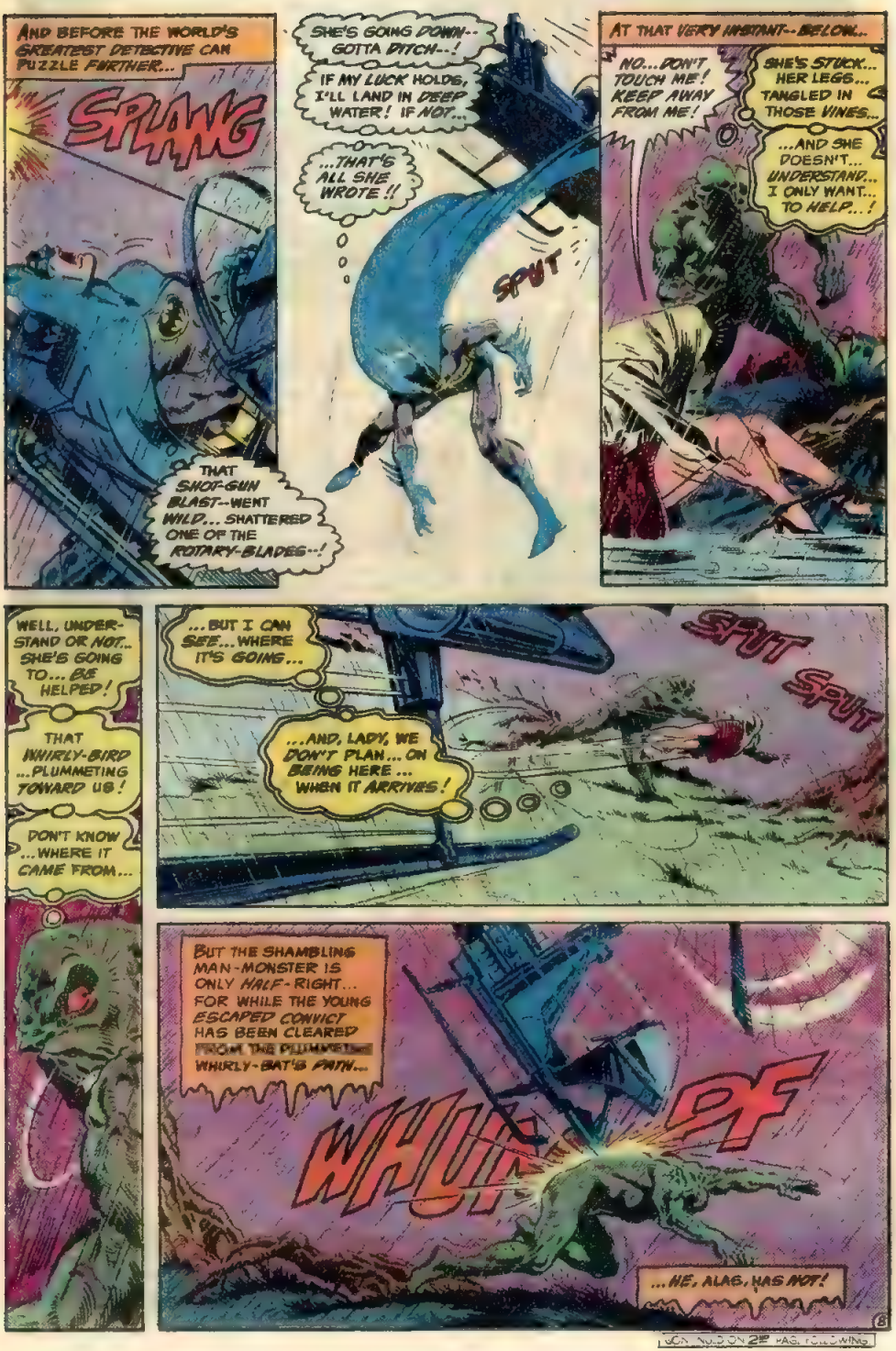
--AN' IT'S ONE O' THEM ULTRA-MODERN FACILITIES--ELECTRONICALLY-CONTROLLED CELL-LOCKS AN' SUCH!
SO WHEN THE STORM DROPPED SOME POWER-LINES, THE SECURITY-SYSTEM WENT TA HELL IN A HANDBASKET!
YEAH... I HEARD THEY HAD A COUPLE BREAKS--MOSTLY FROM THE WOMEN'S WING--AND WITH THIS HEAVY DOWN-POUR, THE BLOOD-HOUNDS CAN'T GET A SCENT!
I FEAR ONE OF ZE...HOW-YOU-SAY... CONVEECTS, HE HAS VEESITED US!
WHAT--?!
ZE RAIN, SHE STOP THIS MORN! I 'ANG OUT CLOTHES TO DRY--MY PLAID DRESS AN' GRANMAMAN'S OLD SHAWL!
WHEN RAIN START AGAIN, I GO TO TAKE IN CLOTHES--BUT CLOTHES, SHE IS GONE!
WELL, CALVIN, LOOKS LIKE YOU GONNA BE MORE HELPFUL THAN YA FIGGERED!
C'MON--IF WE GOT US A PROWLER NOSIN' 'ROUND OUT BACK, WE BEST GO HAVE US A LOOK-SEE!
PRESENTLY...
YA SURE YA KNOW HOW TO HANDLE A SHOTGUN, CALVIN?
POSITIVE! MY DADDY AND ME USED TO HUNT ALL THE TIME--!
LUBIN, LOOK--UP AHEAD--
--A GIRL!
SHE WAS BURYING SOMETHING UNDER THAT CYPRESS--!
BEST NOT TO WONDER WHAT, THOUGH--LORD ONLY KNOW WHAT SHE UP TO OUT HERE!
SHE WEARIN' MAMAN'S CLOTHES! SHE THE ONE WHAT STOLE 'EM OFFA THE CLOTHESLINE!
5

CALL IT A TRICK OF CRUEL FATE, IF YOU WILL... IN THE FORM OF A MOSS-WET MONSTROSITY DOZING FITFULLY IN THE BOG: HE HAS SLEPT HERE SO LONG HE HAS ALMOST BEGUN TO TAKE ROOT--TO BECOME A PART OF THE FETID VEGETATION!
THUS HE ESCAPES THE GIRL'S NOTICE
HE HAD BEEN WALKING A LONG TIME TO GET HERE-- UNTIL, AT LAST, HE COULD WALK NO MORE. AND SO HE SLEPT.
SPOOS
WHAT::?
A MAN MIGHT CALL THIS A RUDE AWAKENING...
...BUT THE CREATURE THAT HAD ONCE BEEN DR. ALEC HOLLAND IS CERTAINLY A MAN NO LONGER-- AND COULD YOU KNOW WHAT REMEMBERED HORRORS LURK IN THE DARKNESS OF HIS SLEEP...
...YOU WOULD ALSO KNOW HOW, IN HER OWN STRANGE WAY, FATE CAN BE KIND...
GET UP, GIRLIE-- AND TAKE IT NICE AND SLOW... OR YOU WON'T GET UP AT ALL!
BLASTED LOCALS--! THEY'VE GOT... THAT YOUNG WOMAN SCARED... OUT OF HER MIND--!
DON'T KNOW... WHY YOU'RE WAVING... THAT 12-GAUGE AROUND, FELLA...
...BUT I'VE A MIND... TO TEACH YOU... TO PICK ON SOMEONE YOUR OWN SIZE--!
WHAT IN--?!
UNFORTUNATELY FOR YOU... YOU'LL HAVE TO PICK ON ME... INSTEAD--!
OH... MY... LORD--!
SNAP
6

WHETHER THEY BE CRUEL OR KIND, FATE HAS OTHER TRICKS IN STORE THIS NIGHT FOR THOSE WHO PROWL THE SWAMP...
...AMONG WHOM MUST NOW BE COUNTED A CERTAIN MASKED MANHUNTER...
I THOUGHT CHECKING OUT SELINA'S STORY COULD WAIT A DAY OR TWO...
...UNTIL I DISCOVERED THAT HER SISTER WAS ALSO AN UN-INDICTED SUSPECT IN THAT DIAMOND HEIST TWO YEARS AGO!
SHE WOUND UP IN ATCHAFALAYA ON A COMPLETELY UNRELATED FELONY-RAP...
...BUT RUMORS OF HER BEING A MARKED WOMAN JUST WHEN COMPER TURNS UP ICED ARE TOO COINCIDENTAL FOR COMFORT!
LOOKS LIKE SOMEBODY'S COVERING OLD TRACKS--PERMANENTLY!
ACCORDING TO THE LOCAL POLICE-BAND, THERE ARE A.P.B.'S * OUT ON THREE ESCAPED CONVICTS-- ONE OF WHOM IS FELICIA!
HER BUST-OUT PROBABLY THREW A WRENCH IN HER WOULD-BE KILLER'S PLANS--BUT SIMPLIFIED THINGS FOR ME!
* ALL POINTS BULLETINS!--Paul.
ALL I HAD TO DO WAS SEARCH A 50-MILE RADIUS AROUND THE PRISON-COMPLEX TO FIND HER!
I REASONED SHE COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN FAR IN THESE SWAMPLANDS-- AND I WAS RIGHT! SHE'S DOWN THERE...
...BUT WHO'S THAT WITH HER?
THE SWAMP THING--?!*
THOSE MEN-- SOME KIND OF POSSE? AND WHY IS THE SWAMP THING ATTACKING THEM?!
WHUMP
KABLAM
* BATMAN AND SWAMP THING HAVE MET BEFORE.--Paul.
7


AND BEFORE THE WORLD'S GREATEST DETECTIVE CAN PUZZLE FURTHER...
SPLANG
THAT SHOT-GUN BLAST--WENT WILD... SHATTERED ONE OF THE ROTARY-BLADES--!
SHE'S GOING DOWN-- GOTTA DITCH--!
IF MY LUCK HOLDS, I'LL LAND IN DEEP WATER! IF NOT...
...THAT'S ALL SHE WROTE!!
SPUT
AT THAT VERY INSTANT--BELOW...
NO...DON'T TOUCH ME! KEEP AWAY FROM ME!
SHE'S STUCK... HER LEGS... TANGLED IN THOSE VINES...
...AND SHE DOESN'T... UNDERSTAND... I ONLY WANT... TO HELP...!
WELL, UNDER-STAND OR NOT... SHE'S GOING TO... BE HELPED!
THAT WHIRLY-BIRD ...PLUMMETING TOWARD US!
DON'T KNOW ...WHERE IT CAME FROM...
...BUT I CAN SEE...WHERE IT'S GOING...
...AND, LADY, WE DON'T PLAN...ON BEING HERE ... WHEN IT ARRIVES!
SPUT SPUT
BUT THE SHAMBLING MAN-MONSTER IS ONLY HALF-RIGHT... FOR WHILE THE YOUNG ESCAPED CONVICT HAS BEEN CLEARED FROM THE PLUMMETING WHIRLY-BAT'S PATH...
WHUM PF
...HE, ALAS, HAS NOT!
8
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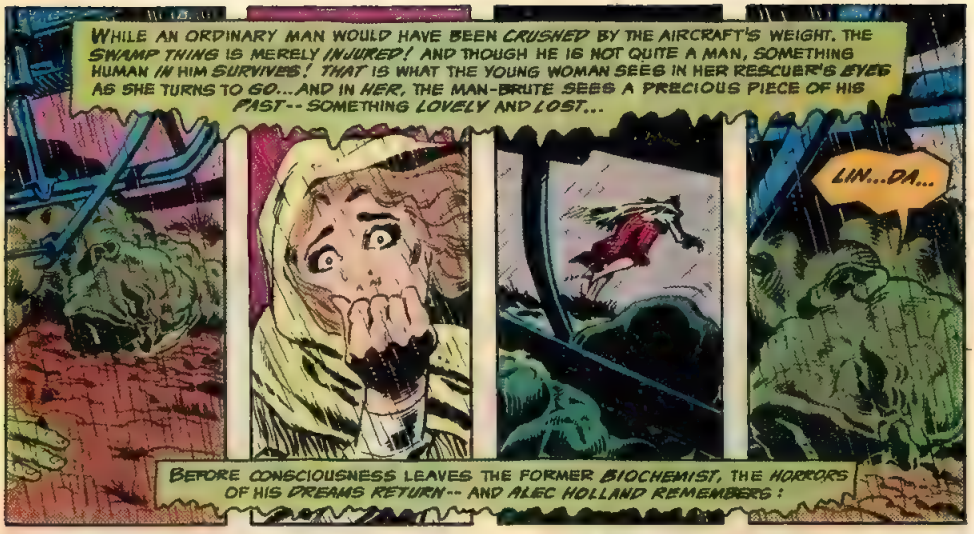
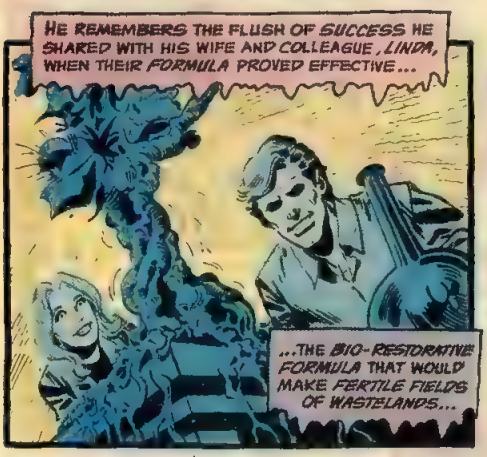
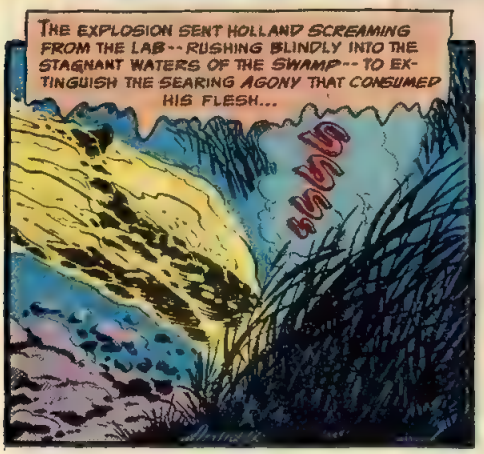

WHILE AN ORDINARY MAN WOULD HAVE BEEN CRUSHED BY THE AIRCRAFT'S WEIGHT, THE SWAMP THING IS MERELY INJURED! AND THOUGH HE IS NOT QUITE A MAN, SOMETHING HUMAN IN HIM SURVIVES! THAT IS WHAT THE YOUNG WOMAN SEES IN HER RESCUER'S EYES AS SHE TURNS TO GO...AND IN HER, THE MAN-BRUTE SEES A PRECIOUS PIECE OF HIS PAST--SOMETHING LOVELY AND LOST...
LIN...DA...
BEFORE CONSCIOUSNESS LEAVES THE FORMER BIOCHEMIST, THE HORRORS OF HIS DREAMS RETURN--AND ALEC HOLLAND REMEMBERS:


HE REMEMBERS THE FLUSH OF SUCCESS HE SHARED WITH HIS WIFE AND COLLEAGUE, LINDA, WHEN THEIR FORMULA PROVED EFFECTIVE...
...THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA THAT WOULD MAKE FERTILE FIELDS OF WASTELANDS...

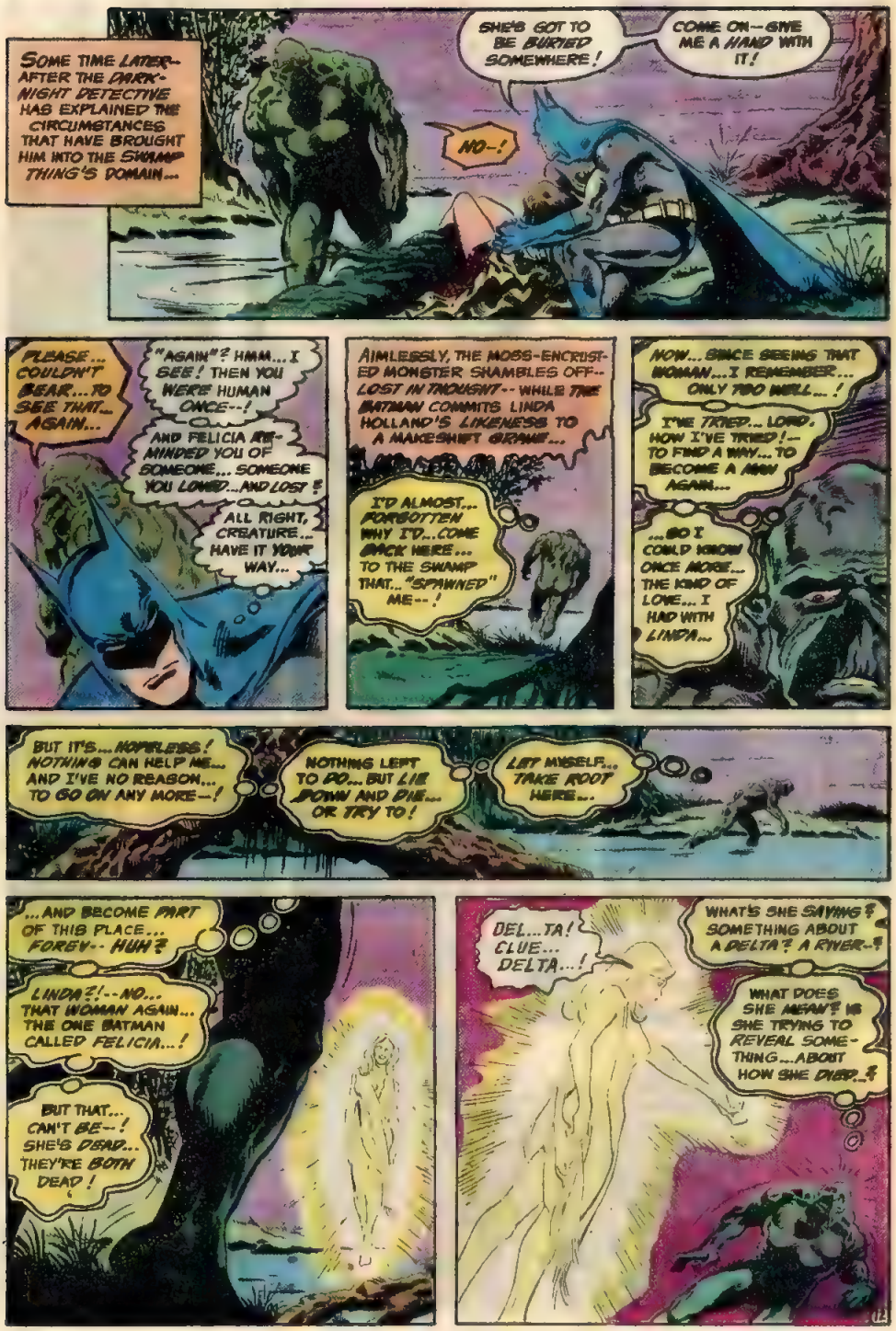
...AND WHICH MADE A WASTELAND OF ALEC HOLLAND'S LIFE WHEN AN ORGANIZATION KNOWN AS THE CONCLAVE SOUGHT TO BUY IT--AND HOLLAND REFUSED TO SELL.
THE CONCLAVE RESPONDED BY PLANTING A BOMB IN HOLLAND'S LABORATORY.


THE EXPLOSION SENT HOLLAND SCREAMING FROM THE LAB--RUSHING BLINDLY INTO THE STAGNANT WATERS OF THE SWAMP--TO EXTINGUISH THE SEARING AGONY THAT CONSUMED HIS FLESH...
SSSS

THERE, THE BIO-RESTORATIVE CHEMICALS SATURATING HIS BODY REACTED WITH THE FILTH...THE ROT...THE DECAY,...
...TO PRODUCE A MISSHAPEN MOCKERY OF LIFE...NO LONGER A MAN--BUT A... SWAMP THING!

IN THAT FORM, HE RETURNED TO THE LAB--AND DISCOVERED THAT THE CONCLAVE HAD NOT ONLY REDUCED HIS LIFE TO A LIVING NIGHTMARE...
...BUT HAD DESTROYED THE ONLY THING THAT WOULD HAVE MADE THE NIGHTMARE WORTH LIVING THROUGH...
LIN...DA...!
ALL THIS, ALEC HOLLAND REMEMBERS... UNTIL OBLIVION CLAIMS HIM.
FOR SEVERAL HOURS, THERE IS CALM AT THIS SCENE OF DESTRUCTION--AND THEN...
:UNNH: MUST'VE COME DOWN IN A SHALLOW POND... BLACKED OUT--!
A MIRACLE I DIDN'T BREAK MY NECK... OR DROWN!
FELICIA--AND THOSE TWO MEN WITH THE SHOTGUNS--GONE!
GOT TO PICK UP THEIR TRAIL, AND--HUH? THE SWAMP THING--! LOOKS LIKE HE GOT IN THE WAY OF MY WHIRLY-BAT--!
HE NEEDS MY HELP!
MUSCLES BUNCHING AND FLEXING LIKE STEEL SPRINGS, THE BATMAN PUSHES AGAINST THE TWISTED METAL HULK--UNTIL...
THERE--HE'S FREE! BUT HE'S OUT COLD!
EVEN WITH ONLY A LIMITED CAPACITY FOR SPEECH, HE COULD PROBABLY ANSWER A LOT OF MY QUESTIONS!
BUT I CAN'T WAIT AROUND FOR HIM TO COME TO! I'VE GOT TO FIND FELICIA!
KLIK
IT'LL BE TOUGH GOING, TOO! THAT FALL ... GETTING THE SWAMP THING CLEAR OF THE WRECKAGE ...TOOK A LOT OUT OF ME--!
HEAD'S...NONE TOO CLEAR--
WHAT'S THIS--? A BODY!
IT'S FELICIA--DEAD! HER NECK'S BEEN BROKEN!
DID THAT HIRED KILLER CATCH UP WITH HER AFTER ALL--HUH?
LIN...DA...!

WHAT... HAVE YOU DONE...TO MY...LINDA?!
"LINDA"??!
HE'S DAZED... FROM THE ACCIDENT-- CONFUSED! HE DOESN'T RECOGNIZE ME--!
HE THINKS FELICIA IS SOMEONE ELSE...
...AND HE THINKS I'VE KILLED HER!
DON'T KNOW HOW INTELLIGENT HE IS...MUCH LESS IF I CAN REASON WITH HIM--BUT I'VE GOT TO TRY--!
THAT WOMAN-- SHE'S NOT LINDA! SHE'S AN ESCAPED CONVICT!
AND I DIDN'T KILL HER! I'M THE BATMAN!
WE'VE MET BEFORE--YOU MUST REMEMBER--
BRAM
--IT WAS IN GOTHAM CITY--FIRST WHEN YOU WERE CHASING A MAN NAMED NATHAN ELLERY...
...THEN WHEN YOU WERE CAPTURED-- AND BROUGHT TO THE CITY BY A BIG GAME HUNTER!* TRY TO REMEMBER... TRY!
* IN SWAMP THING #7 AND B&B #122, RESPECTIVELY! -- PAUL.
SLOWLY, IT HAPPENS...A DAWNING COMPREHENSION SEEMS TO SOFTEN THE MAN-BRUTE'S MISSHAPEN FEATURES... AND THE LIGHT OF REASON SLOWLY FOCUSES THE RHEUMY, RED-LINED EYES--AND--
YES... STOP...I REMEMBER NOW...
11


SOME TIME LATER--AFTER THE DARK-NIGHT DETECTIVE HAS EXPLAINED THE CIRCUMSTANCES THAT HAVE BROUGHT HIM INTO THE SWAMP THING'S DOMAIN...
SHE'S GOT TO BE BURIED SOMEWHERE!
COME ON--GIVE ME A HAND WITH IT!
NO--!
PLEASE... COULDN'T BEAR...TO SEE THAT... AGAIN...
"AGAIN"? HMM... I SEE! THEN YOU WERE HUMAN ONCE--!
AND FELICIA RE-MINDED YOU OF SOMEONE... SOMEONE YOU LOVED...AND LOST!
ALL RIGHT, CREATURE... HAVE IT YOUR WAY...
AIMLESSLY, THE MOSS-ENCRUSTED MONSTER SHAMBLES OFF--LOST IN THOUGHT--WHILE THE BATMAN COMMITS LINDA HOLLAND'S LIKENESS TO A MAKESHIFT GRAVE...
I'D ALMOST... FORGOTTEN WHY I'D...COME BACK HERE... TO THE SWAMP THAT..."SPAWNED" ME--!
NOW... SINCE SEEING THAT WOMAN...I REMEMBER... ONLY TOO WELL...!
I'VE TRIED... LORD, HOW I'VE TRIED!--TO FIND A WAY... TO BECOME A MAN AGAIN...
...SO I COULD KNOW ONCE MORE... THE KIND OF LOVE... I HAD WITH LINDA...
BUT IT'S... HOPELESS! NOTHING CAN HELP ME... AND I'VE NO REASON... TO GO ON ANY MORE--!
NOTHING LEFT TO DO... BUT LIE DOWN AND DIE... OR TRY TO!
LET MYSELF... TAKE ROOT HERE...
...AND BECOME PART OF THIS PLACE... FOREV--HUH?
LINDA?!--NO... THAT WOMAN AGAIN... THE ONE BATMAN CALLED FELICIA...!
BUT THAT... CAN'T BE--! SHE'S DEAD... THEY'RE BOTH DEAD!
DEL...TA! CLUE... DELTA...!
WHAT'S SHE SAYING? SOMETHING ABOUT A DELTA? A RIVER--?
WHAT DOES SHE MEAN? IS SHE TRYING TO REVEAL SOMETHING...ABOUT HOW SHE DIED--?

NO!--THIS ISN'T HAPPENING!
ALL THESE YEARS...OF LIVING AS A... WALKING PLANT...
...FINALLY, THEY'VE... SHATTERED MY MIND--!
HE'S NEVER RUN BEFORE, THIS MOSSY MAN-BRUTE...OR IF HE HAS, HE DOES NOT REMEMBER IT. AND SO HE LURCHES WILDLY ...AWKWARDLY STUMBLING BACK THE WAY HE CAME...
IT'S FINISHED! NOT A PROPER BURIAL... BUT IT'LL HAVE TO DO!
I'VE FAILED SELINA! I COULDN'T SAVE HER SISTER--BUT AT LEAST I CAN BRING FELICIA'S KILLER TO JUSTICE!
YES, FELICIA WAS MURDERED... THAT MUCH I'M SURE OF...
...BUT TO FIND WHOEVER'S RESPONSIBLE, SWAMP THING, I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP!
THOSE MEN--WERE THEY FROM THE SHERIFF? BOUNTY HUNTERS--?
NO... FISHERMEN...
THERE'S SOMETHING...GNAWING AT THE BACK OF MY MIND-- SOMETHING I SAW ON FELICIA'S BODY--
--BUT...SO DAZED...SO HARD TO THINK--!
IS THERE ANYTHING YOU OVERHEARD FROM THE FISHERMEN THAT MIGHT BE USEFUL TO ME? ANYTHING--!
WAIT... MAYBE I DID HEAR SOMETHING... WHILE I WAS ASLEEP...
...AND THAT GHOSTLY... HALLUCINATION... WAS JUST MY SUBCONSCIOUS... "REFRESHING MY MEMORY"...!
IF THE HUMAN MIND... WORKS IN STRANGE WAYS... CERTAINLY... MINE CAN--!
YEB... DELTA... DELTA!
"DELTA"? WHAT'S THAT SUPPOSED TO MEAN?
WE'RE NOWHERE NEAR THE MISSISSIPPI DELTA! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME?
13

BUT THE SWAMP THING CAN ONLY REMAIN MUTE, SHRUGGING HIS MOSS-ENCRUSTED SHOULDERS...
I DON'T KNOW... WHAT IT MEANS! I WAS HOPING... YOU COULD TELL ME--!
THAT'S ALL? HMM... IT DOESN'T ADD UP TO ANY-THING NOW...
...BUT IT MIGHT AFTER WE QUESTION THOSE TWO FISHERMEN!
THEY'RE OUR ONLY SUSPECTS SO FAR-- SO WE'D BETTER FIND THEM!
AND I'VE A HUNCH THAT WON'T BE HARD AT ALL...
AND WITHIN THE HOUR...
B-BUT, CALVIN, WE GOTTA USE THEM RIBBONS--TA MARK OUR WAY INTA THE SWAMP!
CAJUN FISHERMEN BEEN DOIN' THAT FER MORE'N 100 YEARS! Y'SEE, IT'S EASY TA GET LOST OUT THERE AT NIGHT--THE SWAMP ALWAYS LOOKS DIFFERENT!
YOU IDIOT! THAT MEANS ANYONE CAN FIND HIS WAY HERE--!
BUT SO WHAT, CALVIN? YA SAID YERSELF IT WAS THAT MONSTER WHATSIS WHAT KILLED THE GIRL!
WE GOT NOTHIN' TO BE AFEARED OF!
OH, NO? WHO'S GOING TO BELIEVE A STORY ABOUT A...A... SWAMP MONSTER?
AND YOU CAN'T BACK ME UP-- CAN YOU? YOU WERE UNCONSCIOUS WHEN THE THING ATTACKED THE GIRL!
NICE TRY, CALVIN--BUT IT WON'T WASH! WHATEVER ELSE THE SWAMP THING MAY BE, HE'S NO KILLER!
AND NOW I'VE FIGURED OUT WHAT HE WAS TRYING TO TELL ME--!
COME ON, BIG FELLA-- TIME TO MOVE!

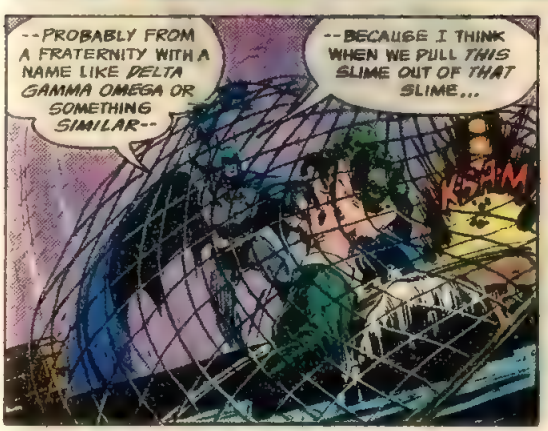
BLAZES! IT'S THAT SWAMP-CREATURE-- WITH THE BATMAN?!
RECOGNIZED ME RIGHT OFF, EH, CALVIN? NOT UNUSUAL...
...FOR A NIT MAN FROM GOTHAM!
GET BACK, WHATEVER YOU ARE! GET BA--?!
BLAM BLAM BLAM
HOLY MOTHER--! I'M EMPTYING THE FREAKING REVOLVER...
...BUT IT KEEPS ON COMING?!
DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU SPOOKS WANT...AN' DON'T CARE--!
ALL I KNOW'S YOU WRECKIN' A MAN'S HOME--
--AN' I GOT NO EYES TO LET YOU DO IT!
DON'T INTERFERE! YOUR FRIEND'S A HIRED KILLER! HE CAME HERE TO HIRE ON AT THE PRISON-- AS A GUARD...
KRUNCH
...BUT WHEN HIS "TARGET" BROKE JAIL, HE POSED AS A DRIFTER-- AND LET YOU HIRE HIM...
...SO HE'D HAVE A "COVER" WHEN HE SEARCHED THE SWAMP FOR THE GIRL--EH?
BRRRT-PUT-PUT-PUT
--AN OUT-BOARD MOTOR?!
15

AND IN SECONDS...
RRRRRRRRR
HE'S MAKING A BREAK FOR IT--IN A MOTORIZED PIROGUE!*
C'MON, SWAMP THING--WE'RE GOING AFTER HIM! IF THIS THING CAN SUPPORT THE WEIGHT OF A PROW FULL OF CRIMI-FISH, IT CAN HOLD YOU, TOO!
* FLAT-BOTTOM POWERED BOAT USED IN THE BAYOU!--Ed.

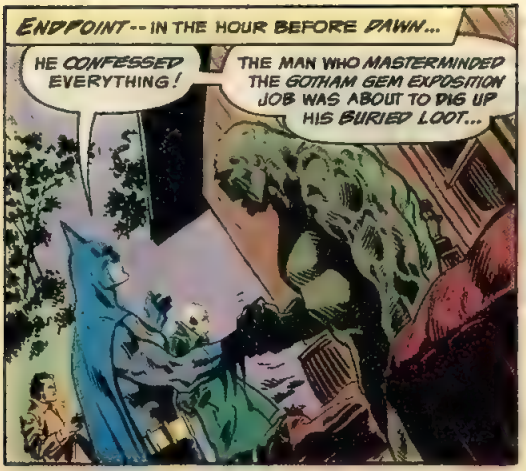
THUS--WITH A BURST OF SPEED...
THIS GUY KILLED FELICIA, ALL RIGHT--AND HE ALSO ACED OUT ALBERT COMPER!
RRRRRRRRRRRRRR

KRAWK
I REALIZED THAT WHEN I PUT MY FINGER ON WHAT I'D NOTICED ON FELICIA'S FACE--

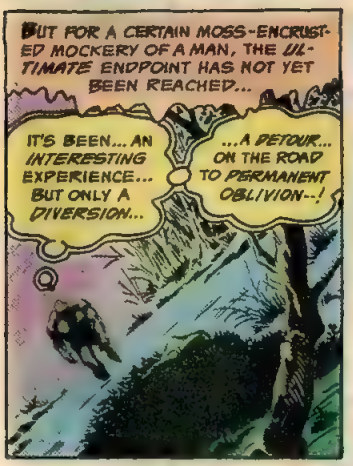
--A TRIANGULAR BRUISE IDENTICAL TO THE ONE ON COMPER'S FACE...
...A BRUISE MADE BY A KNOCKOUT PUNCH FROM A HAND WEARING A COLLEGE FRATERNITY RING--
KA-WHUMP

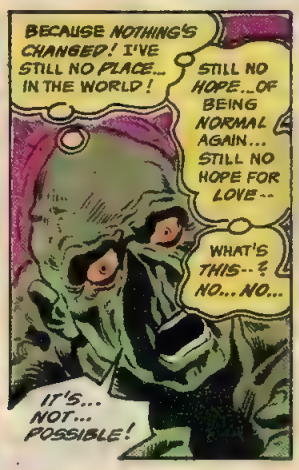

--PROBABLY FROM A FRATERNITY WITH A NAME LIKE DELTA GAMMA OMEGA OR SOMETHING SIMILAR--
--BECAUSE I THINK WHEN WE PULL THIS SLIME OUT OF THAT SLIME...
KA-A-M

...WE'LL FIND HE'S WEARING A RING WITH A RAISED, TRIANGULAR INSIGNIA--
--THE TRIANGLE BEING THE GREEK LETTER "DELTA"!


ENDPOINT -- IN THE HOUR BEFORE DAWN...
HE CONFESSED EVERYTHING!
THE MAN WHO MASTERMINDED THE GOTHAM GEM EXPOSITION JOB WAS ABOUT TO DIG UP HIS BURIED LOOT...

...AND SO HE HIRED CALVIN TRALLER TO MAKE SURE HE WOULDN'T HAVE ANY "COMPETITION"...
--BY KILLING THE ONLY OTHER PEOPLE WHO KNEW WHERE THE DIAMONDS WERE HIDDEN!
THANKS, "SWAMP THING"... I COULDN'T HAVE CLOSED THIS CASE WITHOUT YOU!

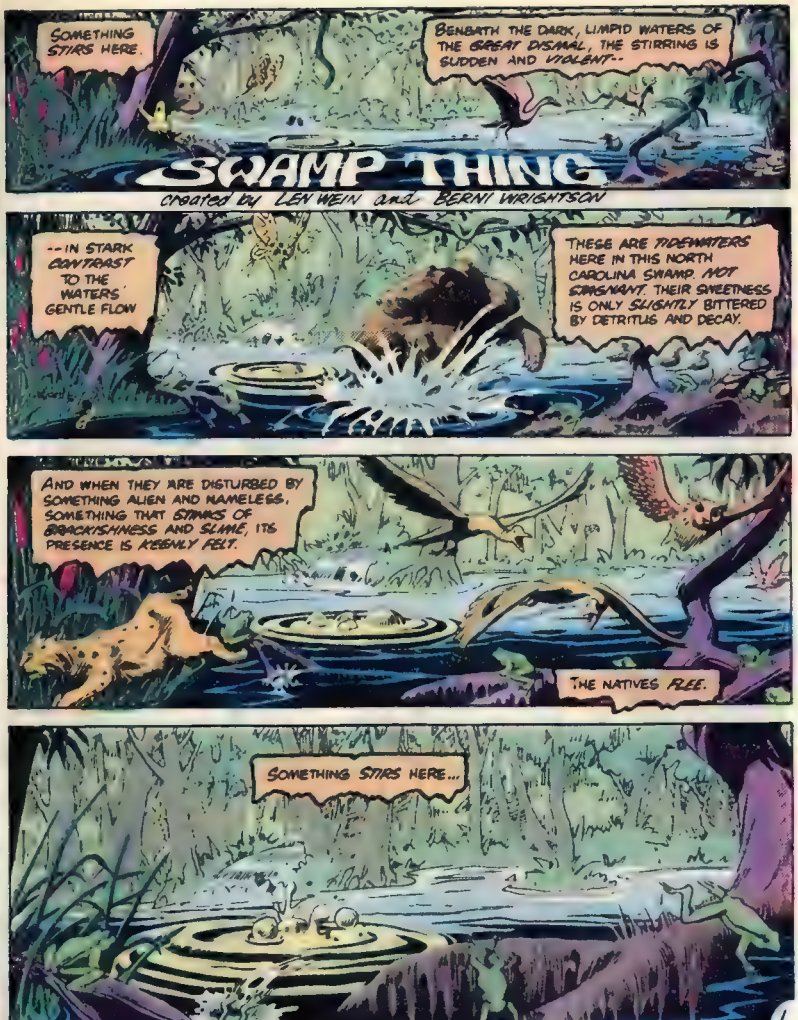

BUT FOR A CERTAIN MOSS-ENCRUSTED MOCKERY OF A MAN, THE ULTIMATE ENDPOINT HAS NOT YET BEEN REACHED...
IT'S BEEN... AN INTERESTING EXPERIENCE... BUT ONLY A DIVERSION...
...A DETOUR... ON THE ROAD TO PERMANENT OBLIVION--!


BECAUSE NOTHING'S CHANGED! I'VE STILL NO PLACE... IN THE WORLD!
STILL NO HOPE... OF BEING NORMAL AGAIN... STILL NO HOPE FOR LOVE--
WHAT'S THIS--? NO... NO...
IT'S... NOT... POSSIBLE!

FELICIA'S SHAWL... ON HER GRAVE--? BUT... SHE WAS BURIED IN IT--?!
OR... WAS SHE? WHAT... CAN THIS... MEAN?
AM I DREAMING THIS... OR IS IT... AN OMEN OF SOME KIND?

I SAVED HER LIFE... ONCE... FELT SOMETHING STRONG FOR HER... IF ONLY FOR A MOMENT--!
COULD SHE HAVE... FELT IT, TOO? SO MUCH SO... THAT SHE REACHED OUT TO ME... FROM BEYOND THE GRAVE?!
IF I COULD MEAN SOMETHING... TO HER... EVEN FOR ONLY A MOMENT... THEN WHY CAN'T I MEAN MORE... TO MYSELF?
AND IF SUCH THINGS... ARE POSSIBLE... HOW CAN THERE BE... NO HOPE...
...FOR ME?
FOR THE CREATURE WHO WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND, THE ULTIMATE ENDPOINT HAS NOT YET BEEN REACHED. AND NOW ...PERHAPS IT NEVER WILL BE!
END

60¢
U.K. 20p
NO. 1
MAY
The SAGA of the
SWAMP THING
BECAUSE YOU DEMANDED IT--THE TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF COMICDOM'S AWARD-WINNING EPIC OF ADVENTURE AND SUSPENSE!
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
WHERE THE ACTION IS!
1st ALL-NEW COLLECTOR'S ISSUE!


SOMETHING STIRS HERE.
BENEATH THE DARK, LIMPID WATERS OF THE GREAT DISMAL, THE STIRRING IS SUDDEN AND VIOLENT--
SWAMP THING
created by LEN WEIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON
--IN STARK CONTRAST TO THE WATERS' GENTLE FLOW
THESE ARE TIDEWATERS HERE IN THIS NORTH CAROLINA SWAMP. NOT STAGNANT, THEIR SWEETNESS IS ONLY SLIGHTLY EMBITTERED BY DETRITUS AND DECAY.
AND WHEN THEY ARE DISTURBED BY SOMETHING ALIEN AND NAMELESS, SOMETHING THAT STINKS OF BRACKISHNESS AND SLIME, ITS PRESENCE IS KEENLY FELT.
THE NATIVES FLEE.
SOMETHING STIRS HERE...

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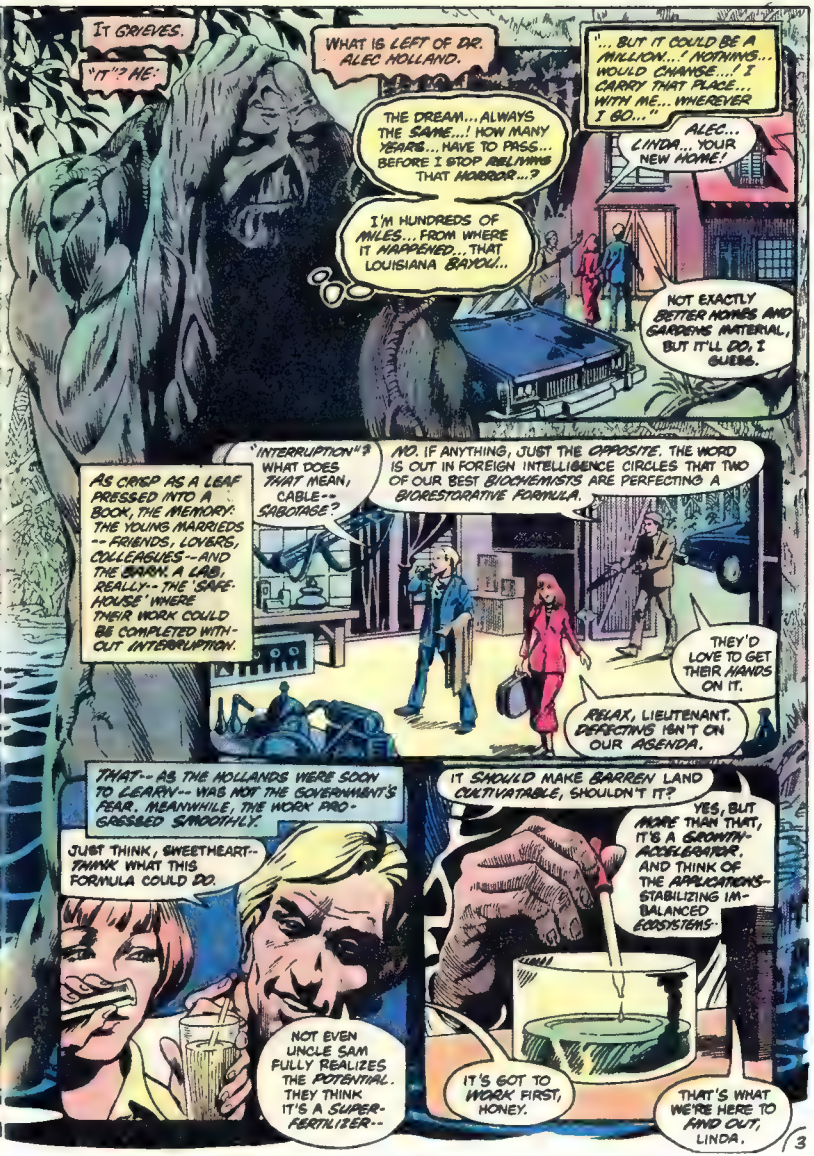
...AND EMERGES.
THE CREATURE MEN CALL THE SWAMP THING.
IT RISES TO ITS FULL, TOWERING HEIGHT IN THE SHALLOW WATER, AND THE SPLASH ECHOES. FLUTTERING DUCK WINGS, SWITCH CANE STALKS SNAPPING UNDER BEAR AND BOBCAT PAWS -- THE LAST SOUNDS OF HASTY RETREAT HAVE DIED OUT. IT IS QUIET HERE AGAIN.
BUT THE MONSTER'S SINGLE MISSHAPEN EAR RINGS STILL, WITH PRIVATE NOISE.
THE BOUNDLESS CLAMOR OF CONFUSION, THE MUTE PROTEST OF PAIN.
LINDA!
NO... NOT LINDA... LORD, PLEASE NOT LINDA... DEAR GOD, DON'T LET HER.... BE DEAD...!
NOT LIN...
A DREAM... THE DREAM.
AGAIN.

WHAT PEACE THERE MAY BE IN SILENCE

A MARTIN PASKO (writer) . TOM YEATES (artist) . LEN WEIN (editor) presentation | assisted by: TATJANA WOOD . COSTANZA colorist letterer


IT GRIEVES.
"IT"? HE:
WHAT IS LEFT OF DR. ALEC HOLLAND.
THE DREAM... ALWAYS THE SAME...! HOW MANY YEARS... HAVE TO PASS... BEFORE I STOP RELIVING THAT HORROR...?
I'M HUNDREDS OF MILES... FROM WHERE IT HAPPENED... THAT LOUISIANA BAYOU...
"... BUT IT COULD BE A MILLION...' NOTHING'S... WOULD CHANGE...' I CARRY THAT PLACE... WITH ME... WHEREVER I GO..."
ALEC... LINDA... YOUR NEW HOME!
NOT EXACTLY BETTER HOMES AND GARDENS MATERIAL, BUT IT'LL DO, I GUESS.
AS CRISP AS A LEAF PRESSED INTO A BOOK, THE MEMORY: THE YOUNG MARRIEDS -- FRIENDS, LOVERS, COLLEAGUES -- AND THE BARN. A LAB, REALLY -- THE 'SAFE-HOUSE' WHERE THEIR WORK COULD BE COMPLETED WITHOUT INTERRUPTION.
"INTERRUPTION"? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN, CABLE -- SABOTAGE?
NO. IF ANYTHING, JUST THE OPPOSITE. THE WORD IS OUT IN FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE CIRCLES THAT TWO OF OUR BEST BIOCHEMISTS ARE PERFECTING A BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA.
THEY'D LOVE TO GET THEIR HANDS ON IT.
RELAX, LIEUTENANT. DEFECTING ISN'T ON OUR AGENDA.
THAT -- AS THE HOLLANDS WERE SOON TO LEARN -- WAS NOT THE GOVERNMENT'S FEAR. MEANWHILE, THE WORK PROGRESSED SMOOTHLY.
JUST THINK, SWEETHEART -- THINK WHAT THIS FORMULA COULD DO.
NOT EVEN UNCLE SAM FULLY REALIZES THE POTENTIAL. THEY THINK IT'S A SUPER-FERTILIZER --
IT SHOULD MAKE BARREN LAND CULTIVATABLE, SHOULDN'T IT?
YES, BUT MORE THAN THAT, IT'S A GROWTH-ACCELERATOR, AND THINK OF THE APPLICATIONS -- STABILIZING IMBALANCED ECOSYSTEMS --
IT'S GOT TO WORK FIRST, HONEY.
THAT'S WHAT WE'RE HERE TO FIND OUT, LINDA.

THEY FOUND OUT THAT IT DID WORK.
THEY ALSO FOUND OUT, TWO DAYS LATER, THAT SUCCESS NOT ONLY HAS ITS REWARDS, BUT SOMETIMES ITS PUNISHMENTS AS WELL.
TOK TOK
GET THAT, WILL YOU, HON? PROBABLY CABLE, CHECKING UP.
NO. NOT CABLE.
DR. HOLLAND? MY NAME IS FERRET. MAY WE COME IN? THERE'S A CAR PATROLLING THE AREA, AND--
EXACTLY. SO HOW DID YOU GUYS GET THROUGH?
LET'S JUST SAY WE'RE A RESOURCEFUL BUNCH. IN FACT, SOME OF WHAT I'D LIKE TO DISCUSS CONCERNS THOSE RESOURCES.
I REPRESENT CERTAIN... "INTERESTS" WHICH SEEK TO PURCHASE YOUR FORMULA.
THE RESOURCES I MENTIONED ARE VAST. WE ARE PREPARED TO OFFER YOU THIS BLANK CHECK.
HEY, FERRET-- THAT PATROL-CAR'S COMIN' BACK. WE BETTER SPLIT.
LISTEN TO YOUR GOON, FERRET. THE FORMULA'S NOT FOR SALE.
THAT FIRST TIME, THE HOLLANDS' VISITORS KNEW WHEN TO BACK OFF. THE SECOND CONFRONTATION DID NOT END AS EASILY.
PUT AWAY THE SHOTGUN, DR. HOLLAND. WE'VE MERELY COME TO REPEAT OUR OFFER.
I WOULD ACCEPT IF I WERE YOU.
CAN'T SAY I LIKE YOUR NEGOTIATING-STYLE, FERRET.
THAT SOUNDED LIKE A THREAT--
IT WAS, BRUNO--?
WHOM
GOT 'IM, FERRET.
TICK TICK
HE AWOKE FROM UNCONSCIOUSNESS TO FIND THEM GONE.
THAT TICKING SOUNDS LIKE... A BOMB!
HE DID NOT KNOW THEY HAD BEEN ORDERED TO DESTROY THE FORMULA IF THEY COULD NOT HAVE IT.
WHAT IN HELL--?
IN ANOTHER SECOND, ALEC HOLLAND WOULD KNOW HOW TRUE WERE HIS LAST WORDS AS A MAN.
TIK TIK
IN ANOTHER SECOND, ALEC HOLLAND WOULD BE IN HELL.
4
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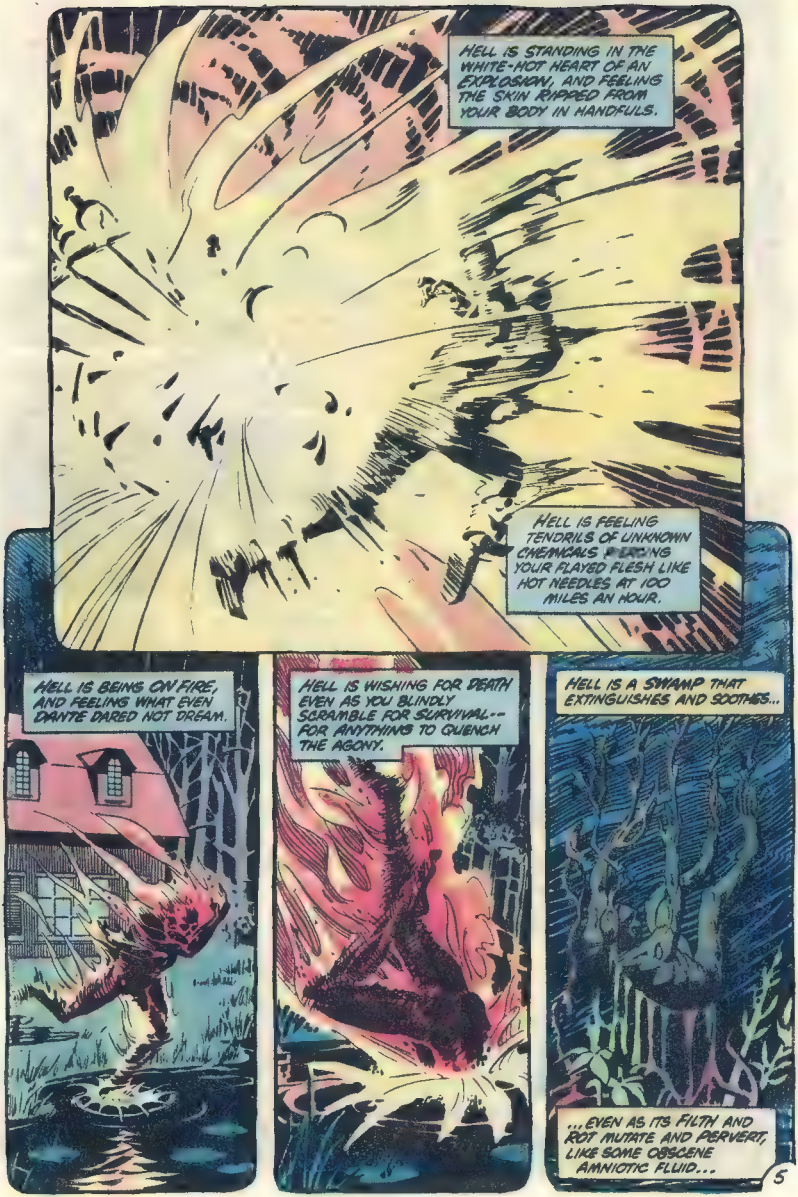
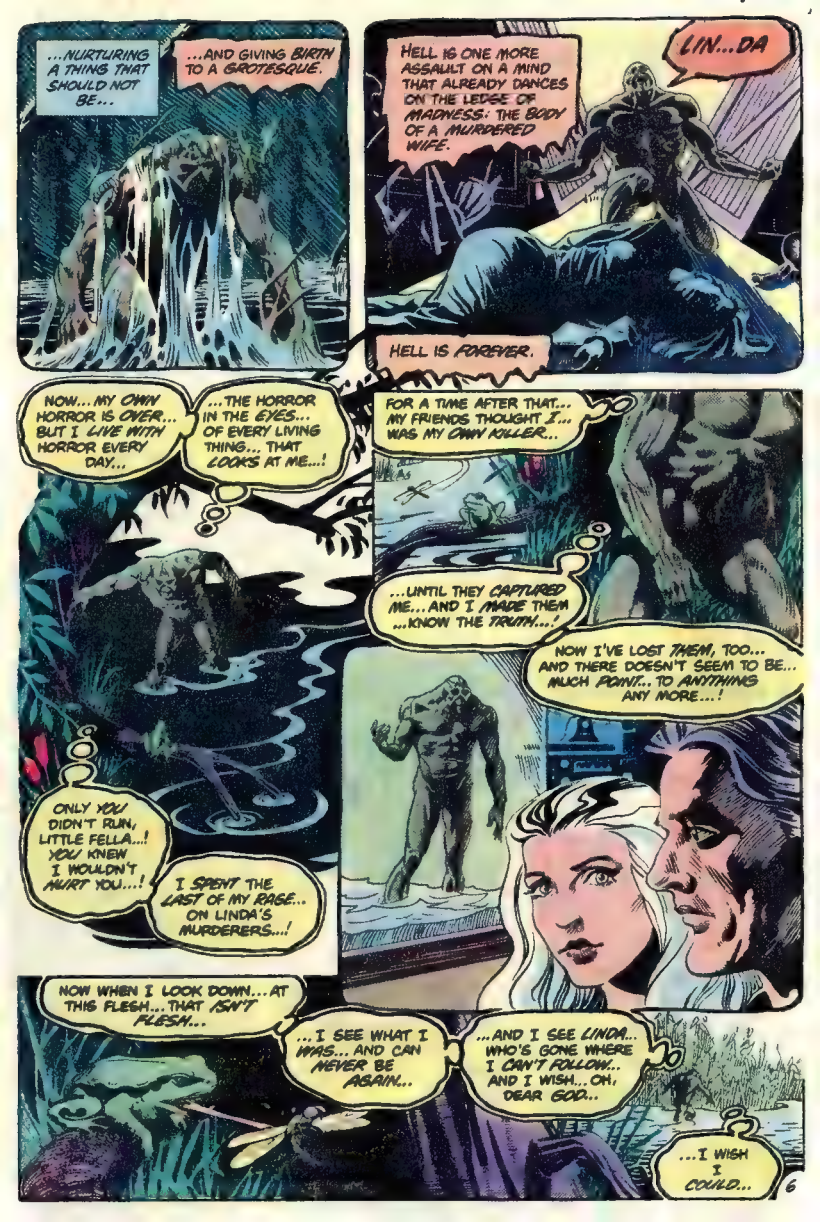
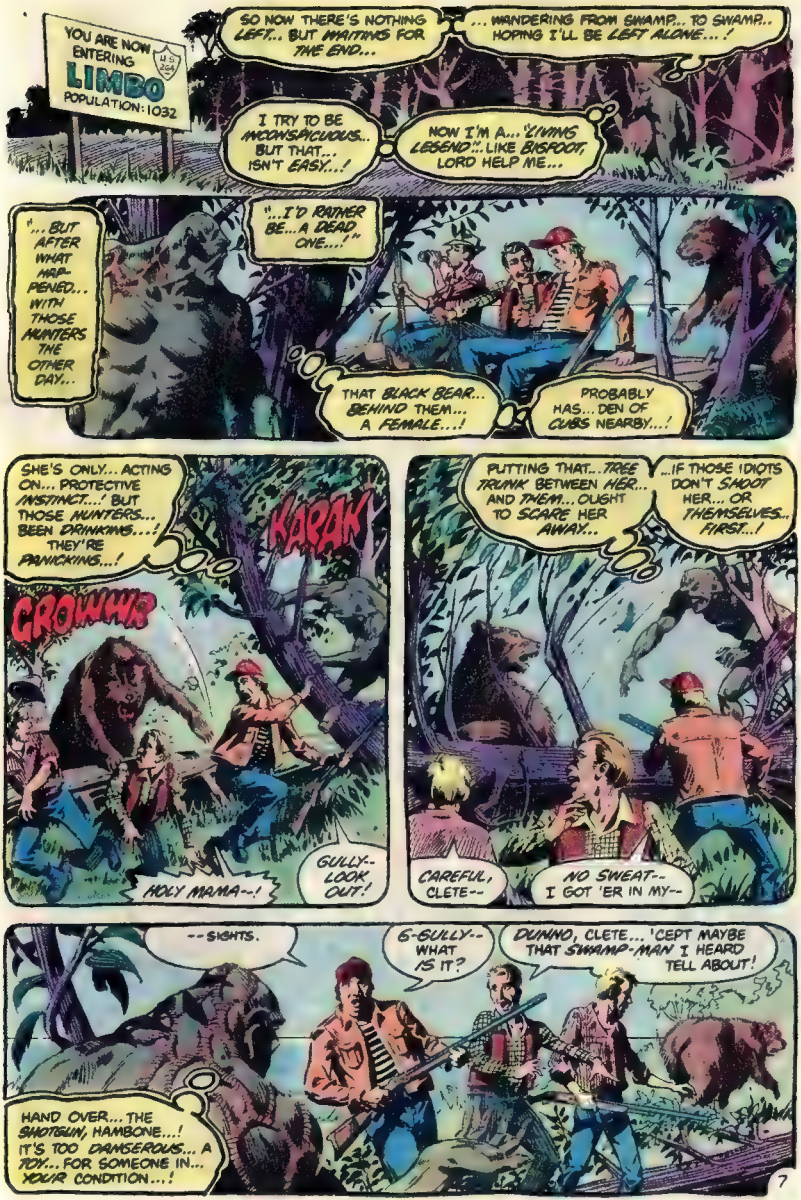

HELL IS STANDING IN THE WHITE-HOT HEART OF AN EXPLOSION, AND FEELING THE SKIN RIPPED FROM YOUR BODY IN HANDFULS.
HELL IS FEELING TENDRILS OF UNKNOWN CHEMICALS PIERCING YOUR FLAYED FLESH LIKE HOT NEEDLES AT 100 MILES AN HOUR.
HELL IS BEING ON FIRE, AND FEELING WHAT EVEN DANTE DARED NOT DREAM.
HELL IS WISHING FOR DEATH EVEN AS YOU BLINDLY SCRAMBLE FOR SURVIVAL--FOR ANYTHING TO QUENCH THE AGONY.
HELL IS A SWAMP THAT EXTINGUISHES AND SOOTHES...
...EVEN AS ITS FILTH AND ROT MUTATE AND PERVERT, LIKE SOME OBSCENE AMNIOTIC FLUID...


...NURTURING A THING THAT SHOULD NOT BE...
...AND GIVING BIRTH TO A GROTESQUE.
HELL IS ONE MORE ASSAULT ON A MIND THAT ALREADY DANCES ON THE LEDGE OF MADNESS. THE BODY OF A MURDERED WIFE.
LIN...DA
HELL IS FOREVER.
NOW... MY OWN HORROR IS OVER... BUT I LIVE WITH HORROR EVERY DAY...
...THE HORROR IN THE EYES... OF EVERY LIVING THING... THAT LOOKS AT ME...!
FOR A TIME AFTER THAT... MY FRIENDS THOUGHT I... WAS MY OWN KILLER...
...UNTIL THEY CAPTURED ME... AND I MADE THEM ...KNOW THE TRUTH...!
NOW I'VE LOST THEM, TOO... AND THERE DOESN'T SEEM TO BE... MUCH POINT... TO ANYTHING ANY MORE...!
ONLY YOU DIDN'T RUN, LITTLE FELLA...! YOU KNEW I WOULDN'T HURT YOU...!
I SPENT THE LAST OF MY RAGE... ON LINDA'S MURDERERS...!
NOW WHEN I LOOK DOWN... AT THIS FLESH... THAT ISN'T FLESH...
...I SEE WHAT I WAS... AND CAN NEVER BE AGAIN...
...AND I SEE LINDA... WHO'S GONE WHERE I CAN'T FOLLOW... AND I WISH... OH, DEAR GOD...
...I WISH I COULD...


YOU ARE NOW ENTERING
LIMBO
POPULATION: 1032
SO NOW THERE'S NOTHING LEFT.. BUT WAITING FOR THE END...
...WANDERING FROM SWAMP... TO SWAMP.. HOPING I'LL BE LEFT ALONE...!
I TRY TO BE INCONSPICUOUS.. BUT THAT... ISN'T EASY...!
NOW I'M A... 'LIVING LEGEND'!.. LIKE BIGFOOT, LORD HELP ME...
"...BUT AFTER WHAT HAP-PENED... WITH THOSE HUNTERS THE OTHER DAY...
"...I'D RATHER BE...A DEAD ONE...!"
THAT BLACK BEAR... BEHIND THEM... A FEMALE...!
PROBABLY HAS... DEN OF CUBS NEARBY...!
SHE'S ONLY... ACTING ON... PROTECTIVE INSTINCT...! BUT THOSE HUNTERS... BEEN DRINKING...! THEY'RE PANICKING...!
KARAK
GROWWR
HOLY MAMA--!
GULLY-- LOOK OUT!
PUTTING THAT...TREE TRUNK BETWEEN HER... AND THEM... OUGHT TO SCARE HER AWAY...
...IF THOSE IDIOTS DON'T SHOOT HER... OR THEMSELVES... FIRST...!
CAREFUL, CLETE--
NO SWEAT-- I GOT 'ER IN MY--
--SIGHTS.
G-GULLY-- WHAT IS IT?
DUNNO, CLETE... 'CEPT MAYBE THAT SWAMP-MAN I HEARD TELL ABOUT!
HAND OVER... THE SHOTGUN, HAMBONE...! IT'S TOO DANGEROUS... A TOY... FOR SOMEONE IN... YOUR CONDITION...!

DRUNKEN FOOL... DOESN'T UNDERSTAND... I WAS ONLY TRYING TO SAVE HIS MISERABLE NECK... AND THAT BEARS...
GET BACK, MONSTER-- GET BACK OR I'LL SHOOT!
I'M WARNIN' YA--I'M GONNA!
WASTE... GOOD AMMO... AND MAKE ME MAD... IS WHAT YOU'RE "GONNA"...!
I--I DON'T BELIEVE IT! THEY WENT CLEAR THROUGH 'IM!
BLAM BLAM
FEEL MORE LIKE A MAN... NOW THAT YOU'VE SHOT OFF... YOUR POP-GUN...?
I GWBAR... WHEN I SEE... GUYS LIKE YOU THREE...
SATISFIED NOW...?
UNNH!
KA-LUMP
...I DON'T KNOW WHETHER... TO LAUGH... OR CRY...!
DROP THE GUN!
MY HAND...!
DROP IT!
SORRY... I CAN'T FEEL PAIN...
YOU... CUT OFF... MY HAND...!
...NOT... THE PHYSICAL KIND, ANYWAY...
YOU DIRTY, SPINELESS LITTLE... CREEP...!
THOUGHT YOU COULD... HURT ME... DIDN'T YOU...?
...AND THAT HAND... WILL GROW BACK... BUT YOU DIDN'T KNOW THAT... DID YOU...?
WELL, I'VE GOT... ONE HAND... LEFT...

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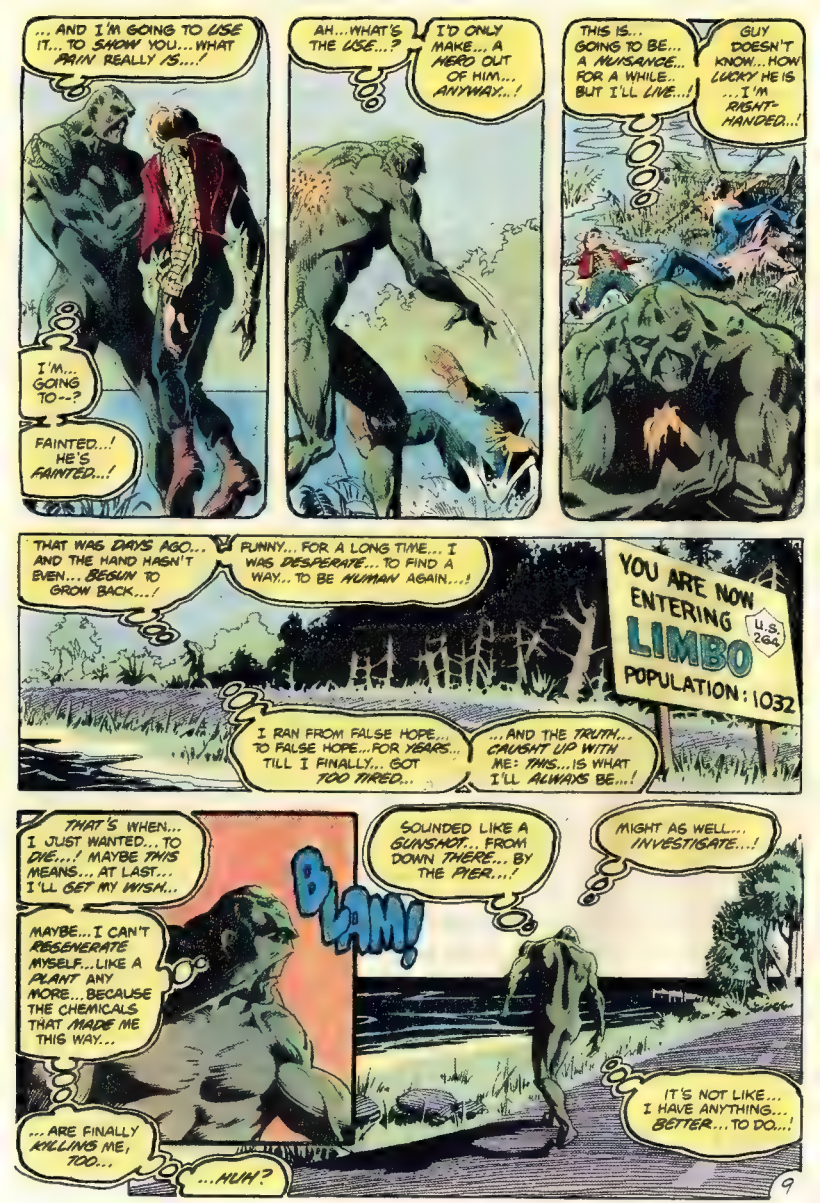
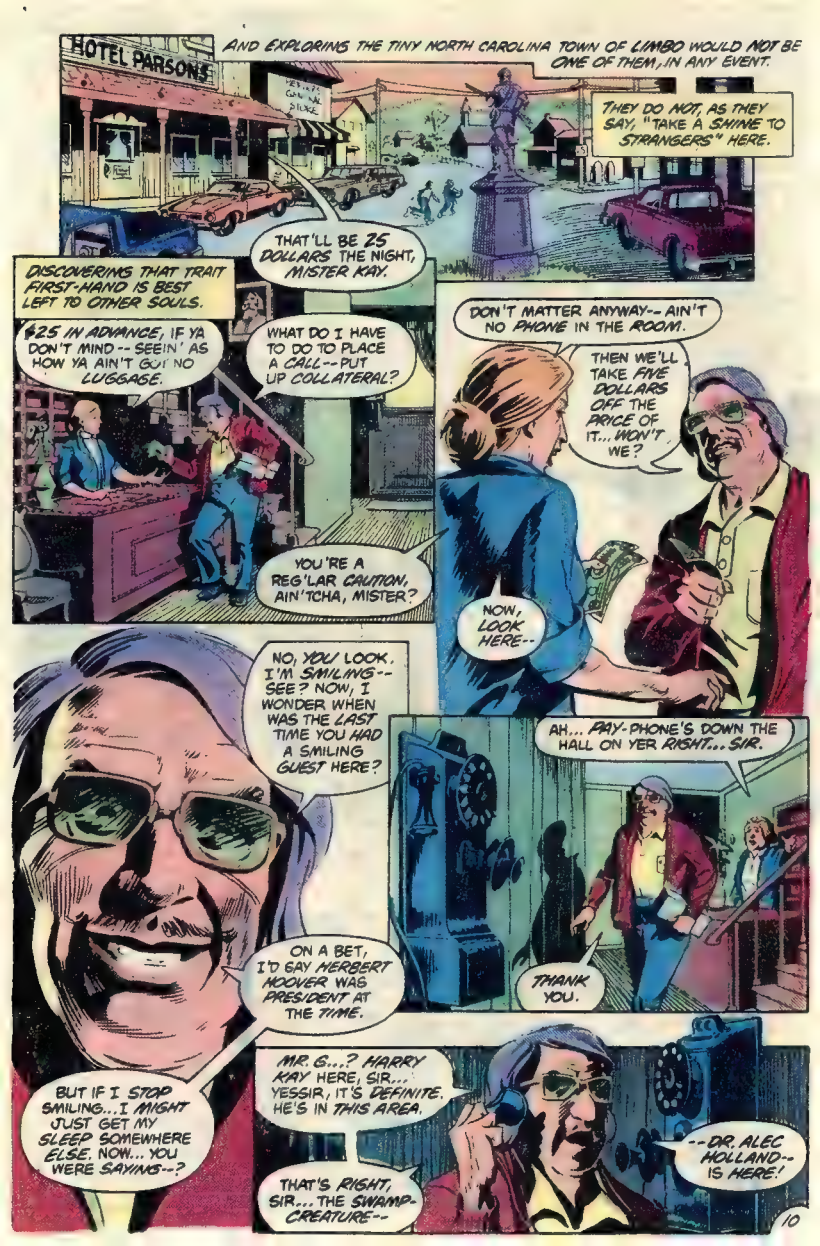
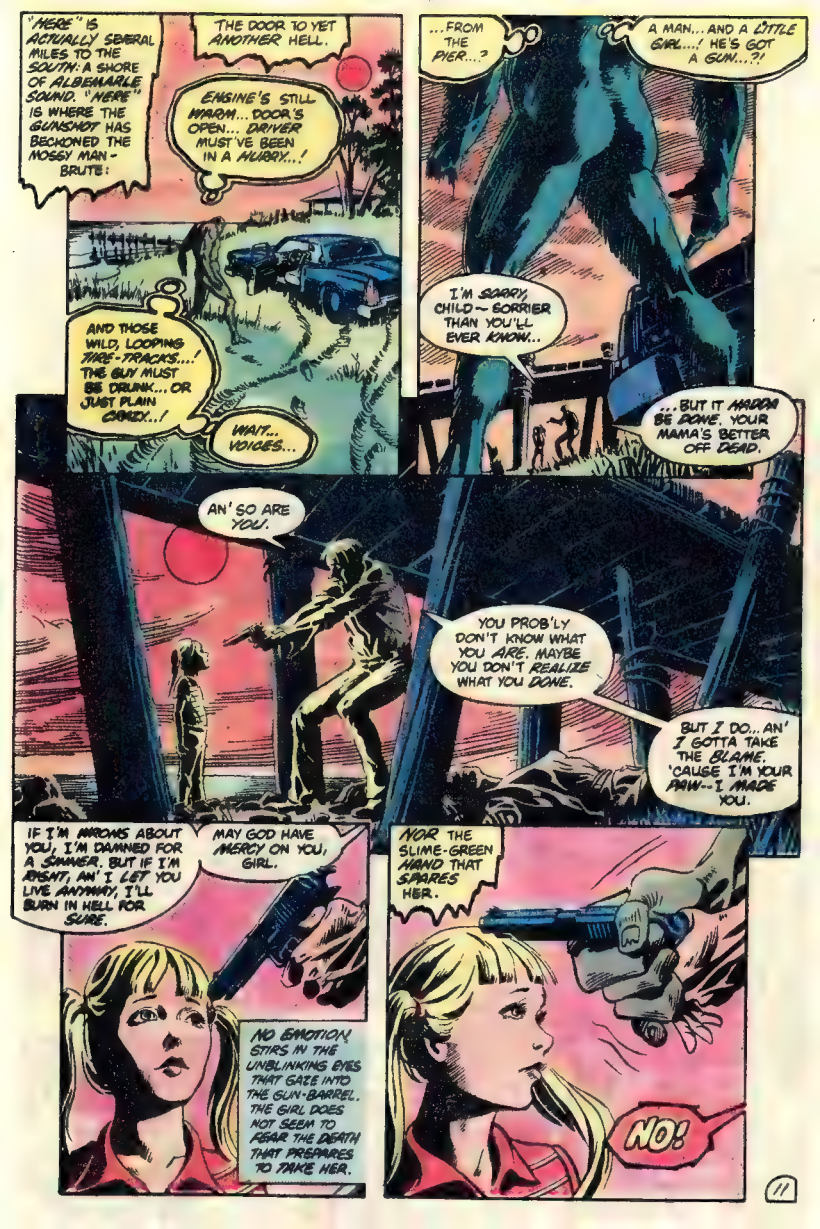
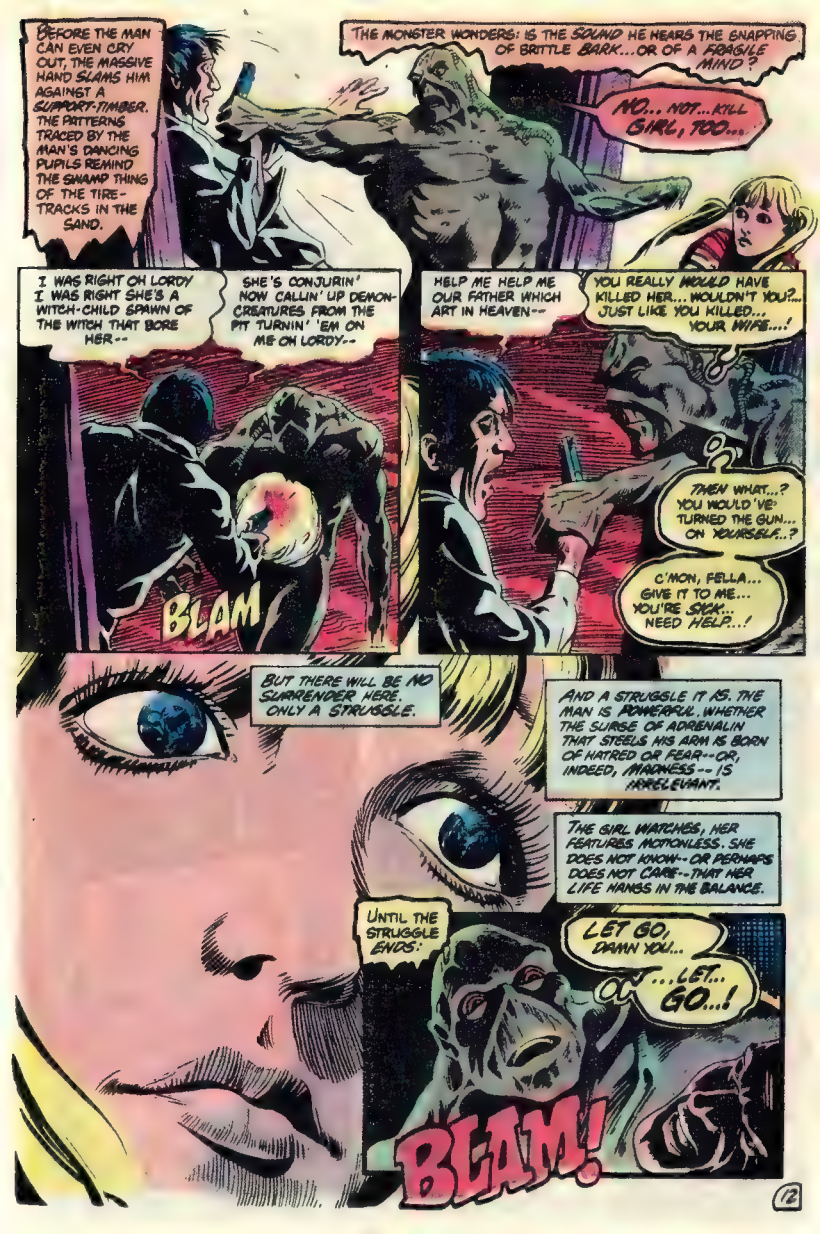

...AND I'M GOING TO USE IT... TO SHOW YOU... WHAT PAIN REALLY IS...!
I'M... GOING TO--?
FAINTED...! HE'S FAINTED...!
AH... WHAT'S THE USE...?
I'D ONLY MAKE... A HERO OUT OF HIM... ANYWAY...!
THIS IS... GOING TO BE... A NUISANCE... FOR A WHILE... BUT I'LL LIVE...!
GUY DOESN'T KNOW... HOW LUCKY HE IS ...I'M RIGHT-HANDED...!
THAT WAS DAYS AGO... AND THE HAND HASN'T EVEN... BEGUN TO GROW BACK...!
FUNNY... FOR A LONG TIME... I WAS DESPERATE... TO FIND A WAY... TO BE HUMAN AGAIN...!
YOU ARE NOW ENTERING LIMBO
U.S. 264
POPULATION: 1032
I RAN FROM FALSE HOPE... TO FALSE HOPE... FOR YEARS... TILL I FINALLY... GOT TOO TIRED...
...AND THE TRUTH... CAUGHT UP WITH ME: THIS... IS WHAT I'LL ALWAYS BE...!
THAT'S WHEN... I JUST WANTED... TO DIE...! MAYBE THIS MEANS... AT LAST... I'LL GET MY WISH...
MAYBE... I CAN'T REGENERATE MYSELF... LIKE A PLANT ANY MORE... BECAUSE THE CHEMICALS THAT MADE ME THIS WAY...
...ARE FINALLY KILLING ME, TOO...
...HUH?
BLAM!
SOUNDED LIKE A GUNSHOT... FROM DOWN THERE... BY THE PIER...!
MIGHT AS WELL... INVESTIGATE...!
IT'S NOT LIKE... I HAVE ANYTHING... BETTER... TO DO...!

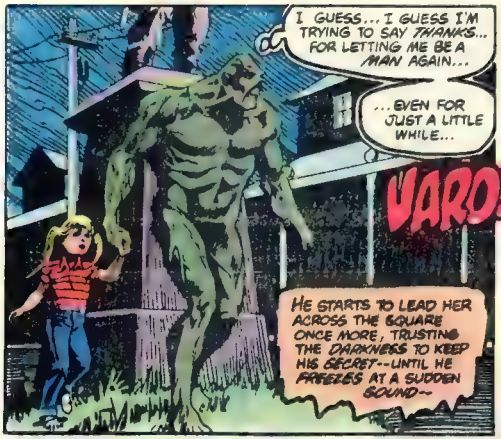

HOTEL PARSONS
AND EXPLORING THE TINY NORTH CAROLINA TOWN OF LIMBO WOULD NOT BE ONE OF THEM, IN ANY EVENT.
THEY DO NOT, AS THEY SAY, "TAKE A SHINE TO STRANGERS" HERE.
THAT'LL BE 25 DOLLARS THE NIGHT, MISTER KAY.
DISCOVERING THAT TRAIT FIRST-HAND IS BEST LEFT TO OTHER SOULS.
$25 IN ADVANCE, IF YA DON'T MIND -- SEEIN' AS HOW YA AIN'T GOT NO LUGGAGE.
WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO TO PLACE A CALL -- PUT UP COLLATERAL?
YOU'RE A REG'LAR CAUTION, AIN'TCHA, MISTER?
DON'T MATTER ANYWAY -- AIN'T NO PHONE IN THE ROOM.
THEN WE'LL TAKE FIVE DOLLARS OFF THE PRICE OF IT... WON'T WE?
NOW, LOOK HERE --
NO, YOU LOOK. I'M SMILING -- SEE? NOW, I WONDER WHEN WAS THE LAST TIME YOU HAD A SMILING GUEST HERE?
AH,.. PAY-PHONE'S DOWN THE HALL ON YER RIGHT... SIR.
THANK YOU.
ON A BET, I'D SAY HERBERT HOOVER WAS PRESIDENT AT THE TIME.
BUT IF I STOP SMILING... I MIGHT JUST GET MY SLEEP SOMEWHERE ELSE. NOW... YOU WERE SAYING --?
MR. G...? HARRY KAY HERE, SIR... YESSIR, IT'S DEFINITE. HE'S IN THIS AREA.
THAT'S RIGHT, SIR... THE SWAMP-CREATURE --
-- DR. ALEC HOLLAND -- IS HERE!


"HERE" IS ACTUALLY SEVERAL MILES TO THE SOUTH: A SHORE OF ALBEMARLE SOUND. "HERE" IS WHERE THE GUNSHOT HAS BECKONED THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE:
THE DOOR IS YET ANOTHER HELL.
ENGINE'S STILL WARM... DOOR'S OPEN... DRIVER MUST'VE BEEN IN A HURRY...!
AND THOSE WILD, LOOPING TIRE-TRACKS...! THE GUY MUST BE DRUNK... OR JUST PLAIN CRAZY...!
WAIT... VOICES...
...FROM THE PIER...?
A MAN... AND A LITTLE GIRL...! HE'S GOT A GUN...?!
I'M SORRY, CHILD -- SORRIER THAN YOU'LL EVER KNOW...
...BUT IT HAD TO BE DONE. YOUR MAMA'S BETTER OFF DEAD.
AN' SO ARE YOU.
YOU PROB'LY DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU ARE. MAYBE YOU DON'T REALIZE WHAT YOU DONE.
BUT I DO... AN' I GOTTA TAKE THE BLAME. 'CAUSE I'M YOUR PAW -- I MADE YOU.
IF I'M RIGHT ABOUT YOU, I'M DAMNED FOR A SINNER. BUT IF I'M WRONG, AN' I LET YOU LIVE ANYWAY, I'LL BURN IN HELL FOR SURE.
MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON YOU, GIRL.
NO EMOTION STIRS IN THE UNBLINKING EYES THAT GAZE INTO THE GUN-BARREL. THE GIRL DOES NOT SEEM TO FEAR THE DEATH THAT PREPARES TO TAKE HER.
NOR THE SLIME-GREEN HAND THAT SPARES HER.
NO!

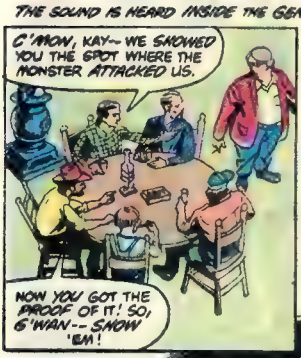

BEFORE THE MAN CAN EVEN CRY OUT, THE MASSIVE HAND SLAMS HIM AGAINST A SUPPORT-TIMBER. THE PATTERNS TRACED BY THE MAN'S DANCING PUPILS REMIND THE SWAMP THING OF THE TIRE-TRACKS IN THE SAND.
THE MONSTER WONDERS: IS THE SOUND HE HEARS THE SNAPPING OF BRITTLE BARK...OR OF A FRAGILE MIND?
NO... NOT...KILL GIRL, TOO...
I WAS RIGHT OH LORDY I WAS RIGHT SHE'S A WITCH-CHILD SPAWN OF THE WITCH THAT BORE HER--
SHE'S CONJURIN' NOW CALLIN' UP DEMON-CREATURES FROM THE PIT TURNIN' 'EM ON ME OH LORDY--
BLAM
HELP ME HELP ME OUR FATHER WHICH ART IN HEAVEN--
YOU REALLY WOULD HAVE KILLED HER... WOULDN'T YOU?... JUST LIKE YOU KILLED... YOUR WIFE...!
THEN WHAT...? YOU WOULD'VE TURNED THE GUN... ON YOURSELF...?
C'MON, FELLA... GIVE IT TO ME... YOU'RE SICK... NEED HELP...!
BUT THERE WILL BE NO SURRENDER HERE. ONLY A STRUGGLE.
AND A STRUGGLE IT IS. THE MAN IS POWERFUL. WHETHER THE SURGE OF ADRENALIN THAT STEELS HIS ARM IS BORN OF HATRED OR FEAR--OR, INDEED, MADNESS--IS IRRELEVANT.
THE GIRL WATCHES, HER FEATURES MOTIONLESS. SHE DOES NOT KNOW--OR PERHAPS DOES NOT CARE--THAT HER LIFE HANGS IN THE BALANCE.
UNTIL THE STRUGGLE ENDS:
LET GO, DAMN YOU...
...LET.. GO...!
BLAM!
12

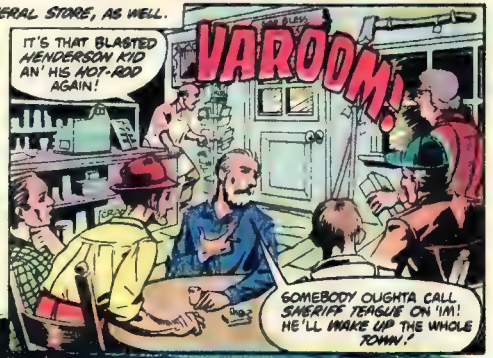
AND THE KILLER BECOMES THE KILLED.
DAMMIT, THIS IS JUST WHAT I WANTED... TO PREVENT..! IF ONLY... HE HADN'T FOUGHT ME...!
NOW THE GIRL.. POOR THING... IS ALL ALONE...!
THE GIRL. HE NOTICES, FOR THE FIRST TIME, HOW PRETTY SHE IS. HEARTBREAKINGLY PRETTY, IN THAT WAY THAT FRAGILE THINGS HAVE OF BEING PRETTY.
AS ALWAYS, HE MUST LABOR TO FORCE SOUND FROM HIS MIS-SHAPEN THROAT.
WHAT... IS... YOUR NAME...?
SHE ANSWERS ONLY WITH EYES THAT WIDEN SLIGHTLY... HELPLESSLY.
HOW... OLD...?
WHERE... DO YOU... LIVE...?
MAYBE... SHE CAN'T TALK...! MAYBE SHE'S ... A MUTE...!
THEN... SHE'S MORE ALONE THAN ANYONE SHOULD EVER... HAVE TO BE...!

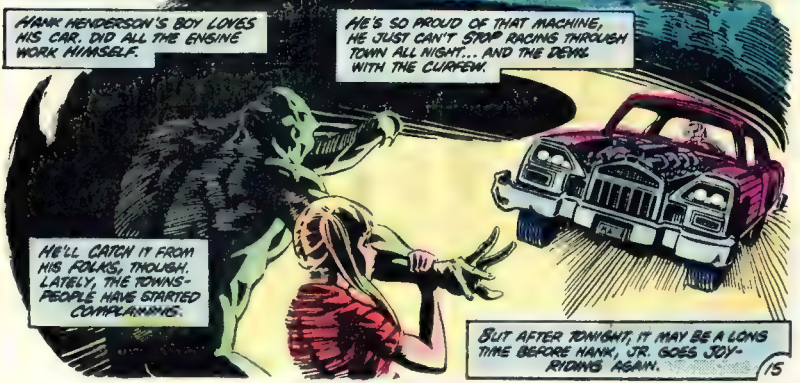
BACK IN LIMBO, HARRY KAY FINDS HIMSELF ALONE IN A DIFFERENT SENSE.
HEEVER'S GENERAL STORE
NOSSIR! NO FIREARMS OR AMMO, NEITHER, 'LESS I SEE YER LICENSE.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT, HEEVER! JUST GIVE ME A PACK OF GAULOIS.
DON'T STOCK NONE O' THEM FANCY-PANTS FURRENER SMOKES.
ALL RIGHT! ANYTHING!!
HENDERSON BOY SAYS HE SAW THAT SWAMP-MONSTER OUT ON 264.
HEAV'N KNOWS WHAT HE'S DOIN' OUT THERE IN THAT HOT-ROD O' HIS, 'SIDES WAKIN' THE DEAD AT ALL HOURS--
--BUT I FIGGER HE MUST BE SMOKIN' WEEDS AN' WHAT-NOT! KIDS SEEIN' THINGS!
AN' WE SAY HE AIN'T.' EVERY BLAMED STORY IN THIS BOOK IS TRUE! I'M TELLIN' YA, CLAUDE, THAT THING IS FOR REAL! WE SAW IT!
SAW IT?
LIMBO LOONEY'S CLUB
CRAN-WALL SEED
SWAMP-MAN: FACT OR MYTH? LIZABETH TREMAYNE
HEEVER'S GENERAL STORE
HECK, WE PRETTY NEAR GOT KILT BY IT!
LET'S... STOP A MOMENT, CASEY...!
HEY, MR. KAY-- YOU TELL 'IM! YOU KNOW IT'S REAL, TOO!
BEFORE I SHOW YOU... TO THE SHERIFF'S PLACE... I HAVE SOMETHING TO... "SAY" TO YOU...
I KNOW YOU CAN'T... HEAR ME...
...YET SOMEHOW ...I GET THE CRAZY FEELING ...YOU KNOW WHAT I'M... THINKING...!
IT STARTED WHEN I GOT THE IDEA... YOUR NAME IS CASEY...! IT JUST POPPED INTO MY HEAD... OUT OF NOWHERE...!
ANYWAY... WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER ONLY A SHORT TIME... BUT ALREADY, YOU'VE DONE A LOT FOR ME...!
IF YOU CAN REALLY SEE INSIDE ME... YOU MAY NOT LIKE ME VERY MUCH...!
FOR A LONG TIME... I'VE BEEN A QUIVERING MASS OF SELF-PITY...!
BUT... BUT NOW... WITH SOMEONE NEEDING ME...
42

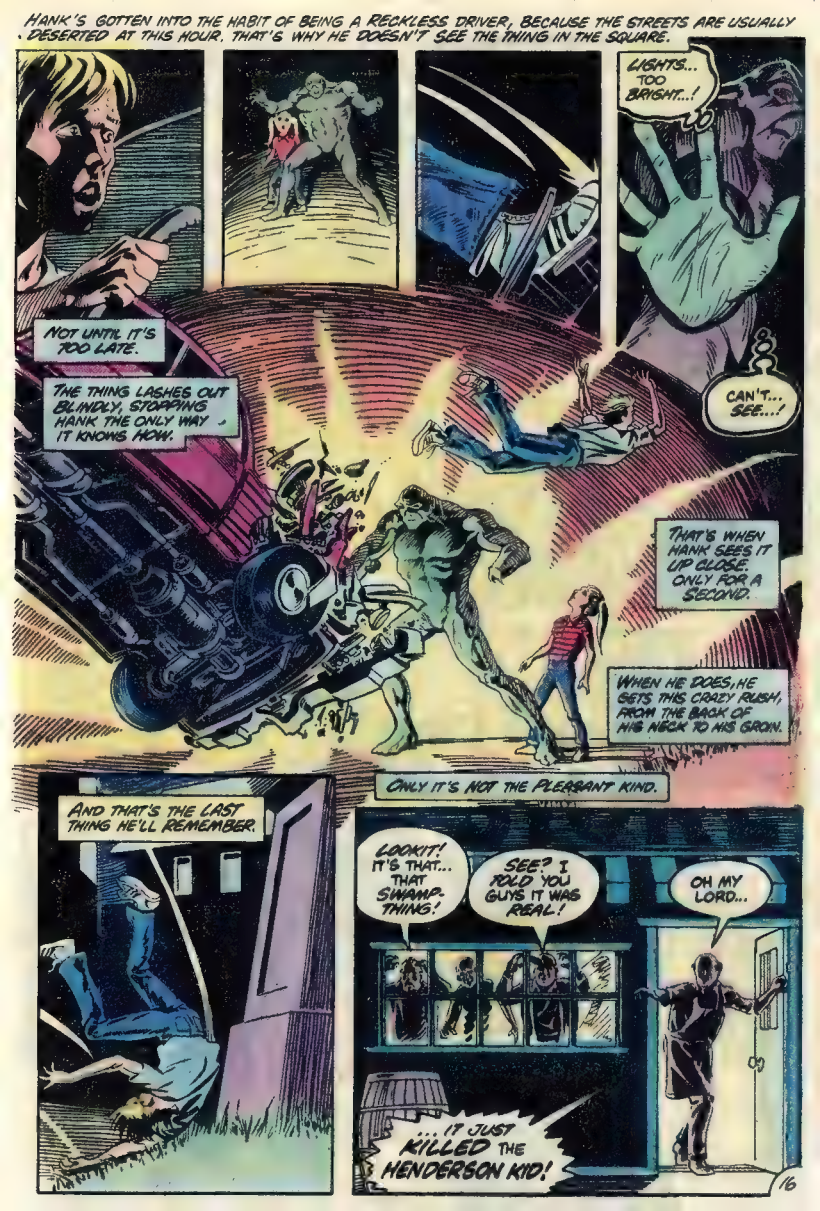

I GUESS... I GUESS I'M TRYING TO SAY THANKS... FOR LETTING ME BE A MAN AGAIN...
...EVEN FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE...
VAROOM
HE STARTS TO LEAD HER ACROSS THE SQUARE ONCE MORE, TRUSTING THE DARKNESS TO KEEP HIS SECRET--UNTIL HE FREEZES AT A SUDDEN SOUND--

THE SOUND IS HEARD INSIDE THE GENERAL STORE, AS WELL.




IT'S THAT BLASTED HENDERSON KID AN' HIS HOT-ROD AGAIN!
VAROOM!
SOMEBODY OUGHTA CALL SHERIFF TEAGUE ON 'IM! HE'LL WAKE UP THE WHOLE TOWN!


HANK HENDERSON'S BOY LOVES HIS CAR. DID ALL THE ENGINE WORK HIMSELF.
HE'S SO PROUD OF THAT MACHINE, HE JUST CAN'T STOP RACING THROUGH TOWN ALL NIGHT... AND THE DEVIL WITH THE CURFEW.
HE'LL CATCH IT FROM HIS FOLKS, THOUGH. LATELY, THE TOWNSPEOPLE HAVE STARTED COMPLAINING.
BUT AFTER TONIGHT, IT MAY BE A LONG TIME BEFORE HANK, JR. GOES JOY-RIDING AGAIN.


HANK'S GOTTEN INTO THE HABIT OF BEING A RECKLESS DRIVER, BECAUSE THE STREETS ARE USUALLY DESERTED AT THIS HOUR. THAT'S WHY HE DOESN'T SEE THE THING IN THE SQUARE.
LIGHTS... TOO BRIGHT...!
CAN'T... SEE...!
NOT UNTIL IT'S TOO LATE.
THE THING LASHES OUT BLINDLY, STOPPING HANK THE ONLY WAY IT KNOWS HOW.
THAT'S WHEN HANK SEES IT UP CLOSE. ONLY FOR A SECOND.
WHEN HE DOES, HE GETS THIS CRAZY RUSH, FROM THE BACK OF HIS NECK TO HIS GROIN.
ONLY IT'S NOT THE PLEASANT KIND.
AND THAT'S THE LAST THING HE'LL REMEMBER.
LOOKIT! IT'S THAT... THAT SWAMP-THING!
SEE? I TOLD YOU GUYS IT WAS REAL!
OH MY LORD...
... IT JUST KILLED THE HENDERSON KID!
16

FORGET YER GUNS! WE TRIED THAT ON 'IM, AN' IT DON'T DO NO GOOD!
BUT MAYBE A IMPROVISED TORCH WILL!
THEY STREAM FROM THE STORE, THEIR FEAR AND RAGE EXPRESSED WITH MUTE ELOQUENCE BY THE WEAPONS THEY CLUTCH SO DESPERATELY.
THE HOT-ROD BURSTS INTO FLAME, AND WHAT THE MEN SEE BY THE FIRELIGHT CHILLS THEM, DESPITE ITS HEAT.
THE CLANCY GIRL--SHE'S WITH THAT THING!
THEN IT'S TRUE WHAT THEY SAY--
--SHE REALLY IS A... A WITCH-CHILD!
THERE IS AN EXPRESSION IN LIMBO FOR WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE: THEIR BLOOD IS UP.
BUT INSIDE THE STORE, A MUCH COOLER TEMPERATURE PREVAILS.
MR. G?... ABOUT HOLLAND--HE'S RIGHT OUTSIDE! THERE'S A LITTLE GIRL WITH HIM...
... AND IT LOOKS LIKE HE'S GOING TO GET INTO A BRAWL WITH THE LOCALS!
SEE TO IT THAT NO HARM COMES TO HIM, DR. KAY.
THEY'RE GOING CRAZY, SIR--
NOT ONLY MUST HOLLAND SURVIVE... HE MUST ESCAPE.
YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO, DOCTOR. USE THE GIRL.
YESSIR... BUT WE'LL HAVE TO WORK FAST. YOU REMEMBER THAT TISSUE-SAMPLE I TOLD YOU ABOUT...?
WELL, I'VE COMPLETED A THOROUGH ANALYSIS, MR. G, AND MY INITIAL CONCLUSION WAS CORRECT. THERE'S NO DOUBT ABOUT IT--
--ALEC HOLLAND IS DYING!
NEXT: THE MAN CALLED GRASP!

NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE FROM AVCO-EMBASSY!

The SAGA of The SWAMP THING

60¢ U.K. 20p

NO. 2 JUNE

APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

WHERE THE ACTION IS!

SWAMP THING
CREATED BY: LEN WEIN & BERNIE WRIGHTSON
IT'S BEEN QUITE A WHILE SINCE ANYTHING EXCITING HAS HAPPENED IN LIMBO, NORTH CAROLINA.
BUT SINCE THE MONSTER CAME TO TOWN, THINGS HAVE BEEN DIFFERENT.
TERROR. RAGE. THE URGE TO LASH OUT --THE IMPULSE THAT COMES FROM FEELING THREATENED AND HELPLESS. THESE ARE DISTANT MEMORIES HERE, OLD GHOSTS IN THE BLOOD...
...AND IT'S BEEN A LONG TIME SINCE THEY'VE STIRRED. LIMBO HAS BEEN PEACEFUL FOR GENERATIONS.
BUT NOTHING LASTS FOREVER.
MARTIN PASKO (writer) TOM YEATES (artist) LEN WEIN (editor) PRESENTATION ASSISTED BY TATJANA WOOD (Colorist) and JOHN COSTANZA (letterer)
LOOK! THE LI'L MUTE-GIRL CONJURED A DEMON-THING,! AN' IT KILLED THE HENDERSON BOY!
GET IT!
SOMETHING to LIVE FOR

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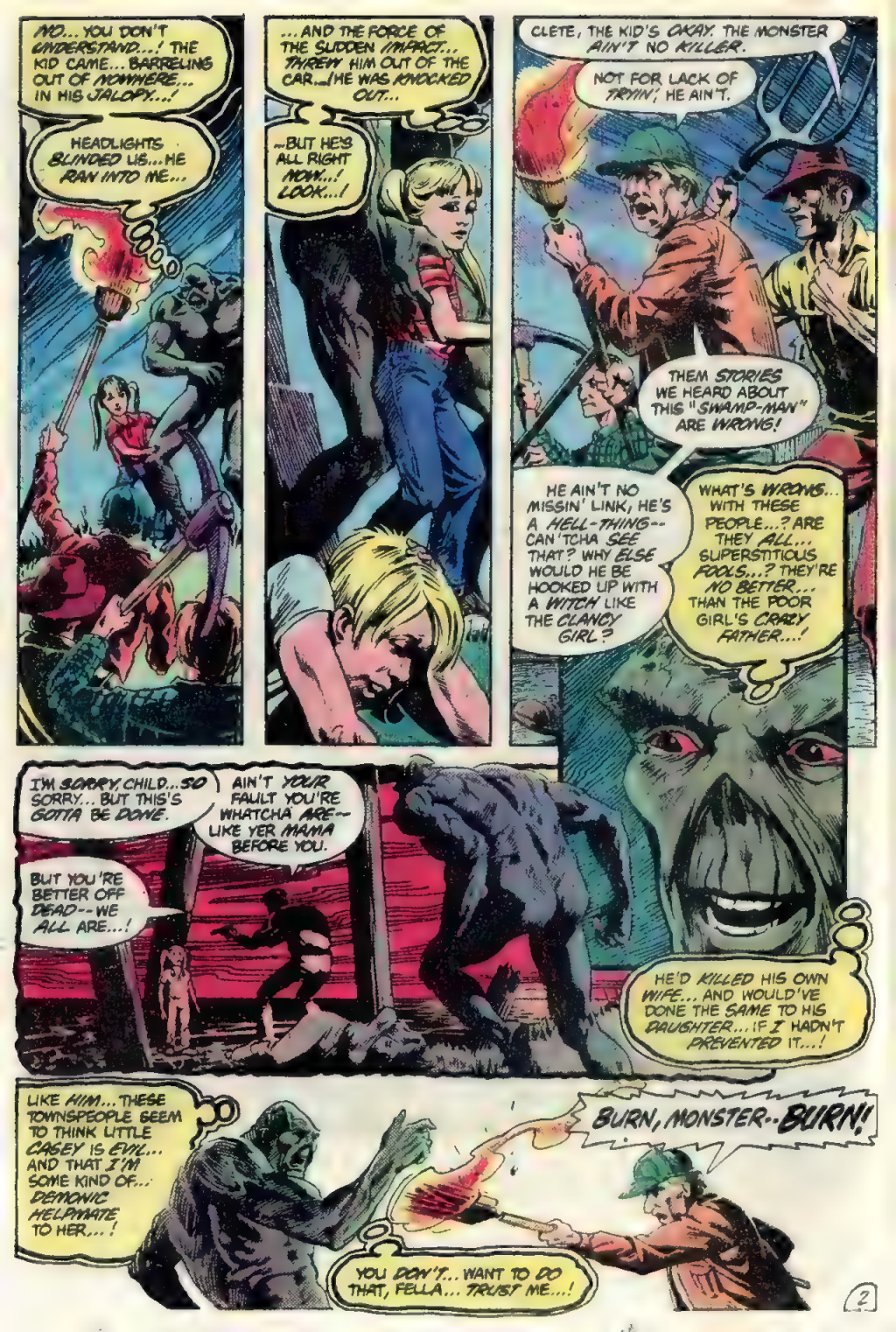
NO... YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND...! THE KID CAME... BARRELING OUT OF NOWHERE... IN HIS JALOPY...!
HEADLIGHTS BLINDED US... HE RAN INTO ME...
...AND THE FORCE OF THE SUDDEN IMPACT... TORE HIM OUT OF THE CAR...! HE WAS KNOCKED OUT...
...BUT HE'S ALL RIGHT NOW...! LOOK...!
CLETE, THE KID'S OKAY. THE MONSTER AIN'T NO KILLER.
NOT FOR LACK OF TRYIN', HE AIN'T.
THEM STORIES WE HEARD ABOUT THIS "SWAMP-MAN" ARE WRONG!
HE AIN'T NO MISSIN' LINK, HE'S A HELL-THING-- CAN'TCHA SEE THAT? WHY ELSE WOULD HE BE HOOKED UP WITH A WITCH LIKE THE CLANCY GIRL?
WHAT'S WRONG... WITH THESE PEOPLE...? ARE THEY ALL... SUPERSTITIOUS FOOLS...? THEY'RE NO BETTER... THAN THE POOR GIRL'S CRAZY FATHER...!
I'M SORRY, CHILD... SO SORRY... BUT THIS'S GOTTA BE DONE.
AIN'T YOUR FAULT YOU'RE WHATCHA ARE-- LIKE YER MAMA BEFORE YOU.
BUT YOU'RE BETTER OFF DEAD-- WE ALL ARE...!
HE'D KILLED HIS OWN WIFE... AND WOULD'VE DONE THE SAME TO HIS DAUGHTER... IF I HADN'T PREVENTED IT...!
LIKE HIM... THESE TOWNSPEOPLE SEEM TO THINK LITTLE CASEY IS EVIL... AND THAT I'M SOME KIND OF... DEMONIC HELPMATE TO HER...!
BURN, MONSTER.. BURN!
YOU DON'T... WANT TO DO THAT, FELLA... TRUST ME...!

I WON'T EVEN FEEL THAT TORCH...! MY BODY'S TOO WET... WITH ALL THIS MOSS... AND SLIME...!
SEE...? NOW... DO YOU STILL WANT TO PROVOKE ME...
...ESPECIALLY AFTER WHAT YOU GUYS DID TO ME... LAST WEEK...?
YOU WERE OUT HUNTING... REMEMBER...? A BEAR ATTACKED YOU...
HSST
...I TRIED TO HELP... SCARED THE BEAR OFF... BUT THEN YOU ALL SPOOKED... TURNED ON ME... AND IN THE STRUGGLE... YOUR PAL CUT OFF MY HAND...! *
* SHOWN LAST ISSUE — LEN.
I FOUGHT YOU OFF EVEN THEN... SINGLE-HANDED... AND LEFT YOU LYING IN THAT SWAMP... OUT COLD...!
I THOUGHT YOU WOULD'VE LEARNED BY NOW... NOT TO GET ME MAD...!
BUT... HOW STUPID OF ME...! YOU'D HAVE TO HAVE A... BRAIN FOR THAT... WOULDN'T YOU...?
AH, WELL... LOOKS LIKE THIS ROUND... WILL END EVEN FASTER... THAN THE FIRST...!
WOK
SEEMS TO ME YOUR MISTAKES...
...ARE LIKE HISTORY:
:UNHH!:
THEY BOTH HAVE A TENDENCY... TO REPEAT THEMSELVES...!
WHAM
AND THOUGH SOME ARE SLOW TO LEARN THE LESSON, INFLICTING BODILY HARM ON THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND IS DEFINITELY A MISTAKE.

BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHO WILL STILL TRY.
THE MAN ENGAGED IN A SUMMIT CONFERENCE INSIDE HEEVER'S GENERAL STORE IS ONE OF THEM.
YESSIR, MISTER G, THAT'S RIGHT--
--I TRACKED HOLLAND TO THIS AREA ONLY TWO DAYS AGO... I MET SOME HUNTERS WHO'D FOUGHT HIM IN THE SWAMPS.
...YESSIR, CUT OFF HIS HAND... THEY DIRECTED ME TO THE SPOT, AND I FOUND IT IN THE WATER.
YOU SAID YOU ANALYZED THE TISSUES, DOCTOR KAY... AND YOU'RE SURE YOU FOUND NECROSIS?
ABSOLUTELY, MR. G.
THERE'S NO DOUBT IN MY MIND, SIR-- ALEC HOLLAND IS DYING.
BUT HE CAN STILL BE USEFUL TO US.
CAIN HE?
GOOD, GOOD. BUT YOU'LL HAVE TO WORK FAST.
USE THE GIRL.
YESSIR--AND I KNOW JUST HOW TO DO IT, TOO.
I'LL HAVE TO CONTACT ONE OF OUR PILOTS FIRST, THOUGH. IF THERE'S A PLANE AVAILABLE, I CAN DELIVER HOLLAND IN 14 HOURS.
CHLOROFORM
FINE, DOCTOR.
COME THROUGH FOR US ON THIS, AND THERE'LL BE SOMETHING EXTRA IN YOUR NEXT PAY-ENVELOPE.
THAT I'LL BELIEVE WHEN I SEE IT, YOU--
WHAT'S THIS--?
ONLY NOW DOES HARRY KAY NOTICE THE STRANGE, ACRID ODORS FILLING THE ROOM, AS HE FINDS IT DIFFICULT TO BREATHE.
THE LIGHT FROM THE BURNING CAR OUTSIDE HAS GROWN BRIGHTER, IT FLICKERS FASTER NOW, AND THE PEOPLE IN IT MOVE JERKILY, AS IF CAPTURED IN AN OLD-TIME SILENT MOVIE.
LOOK! THE SPARKS--!
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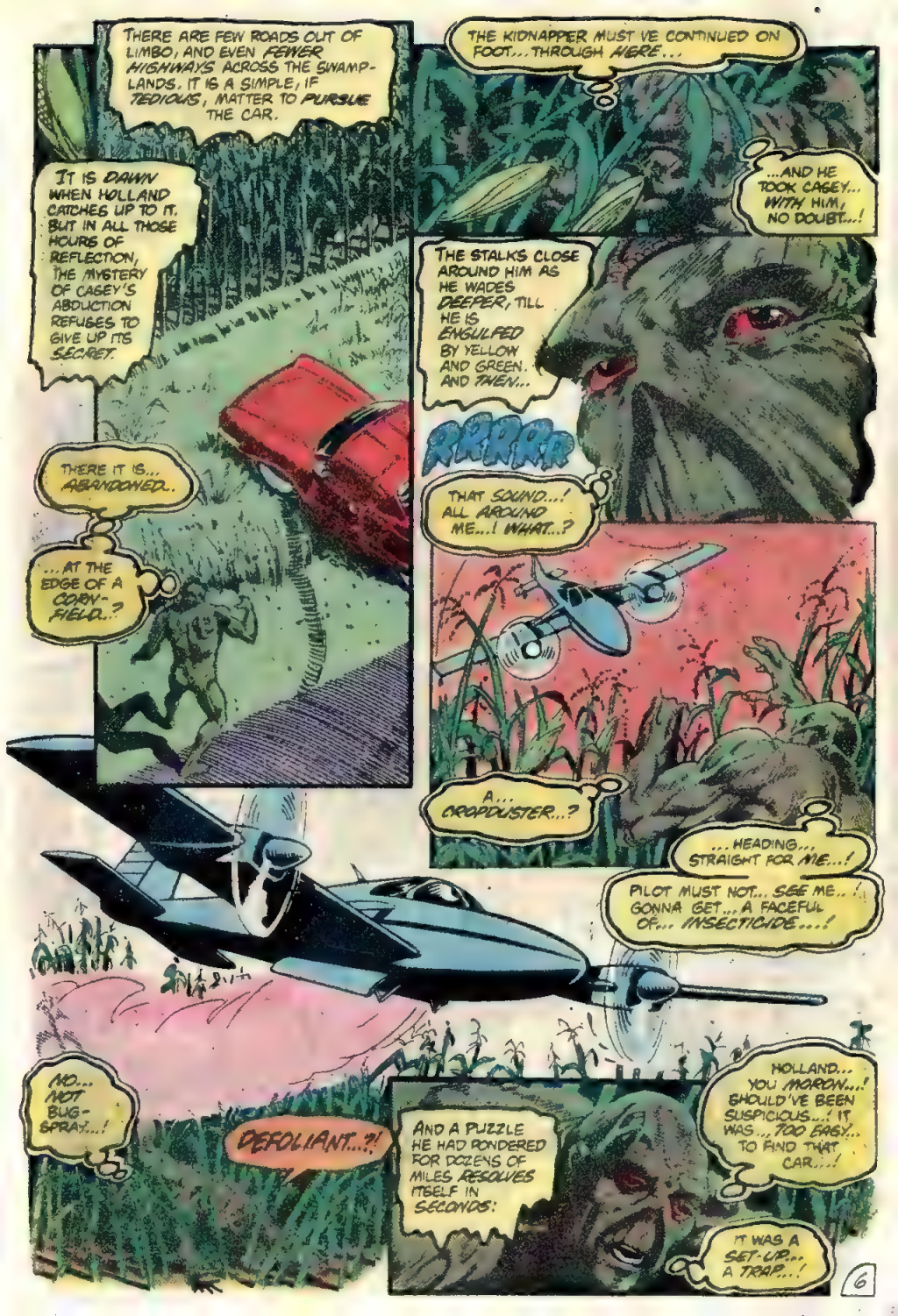
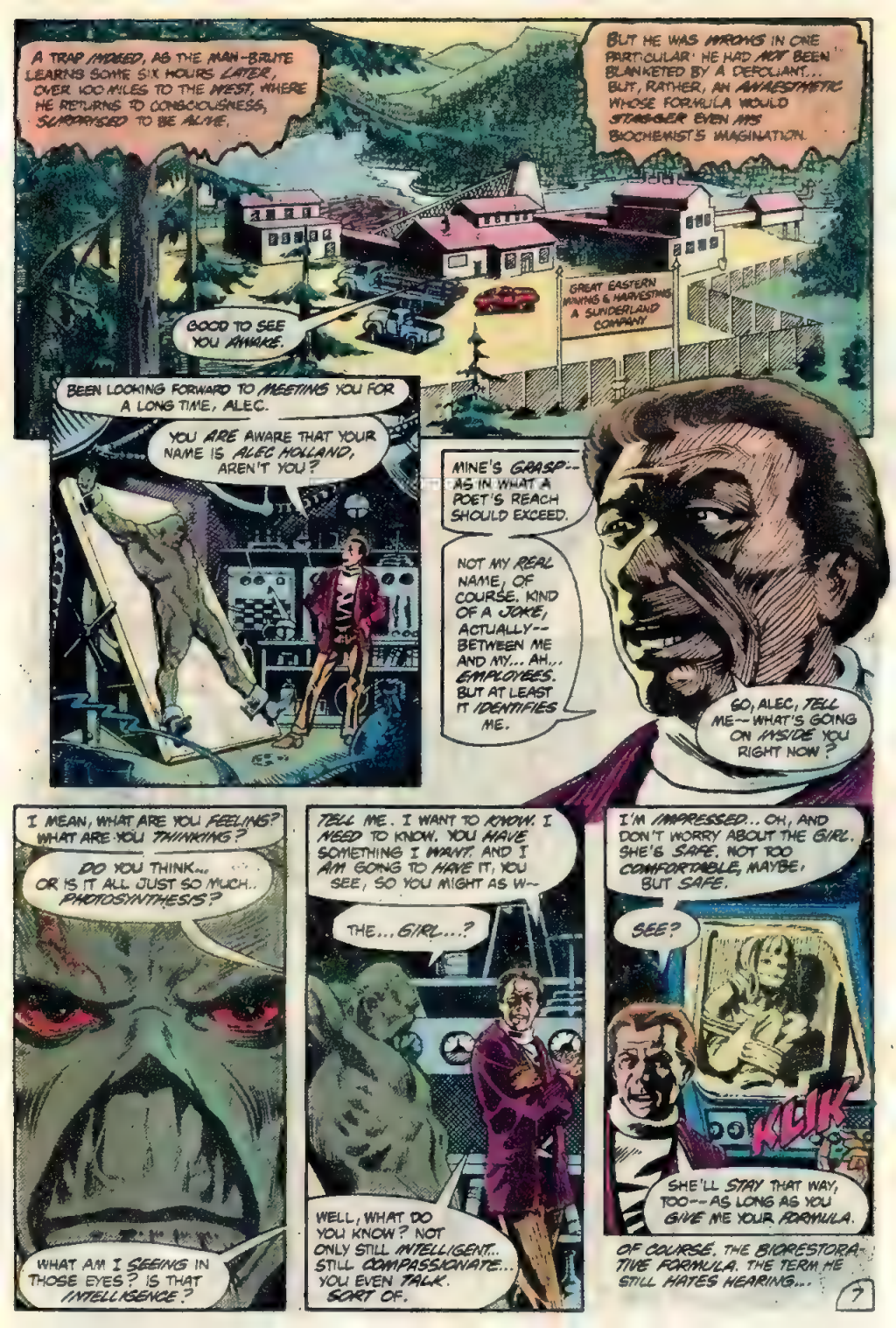
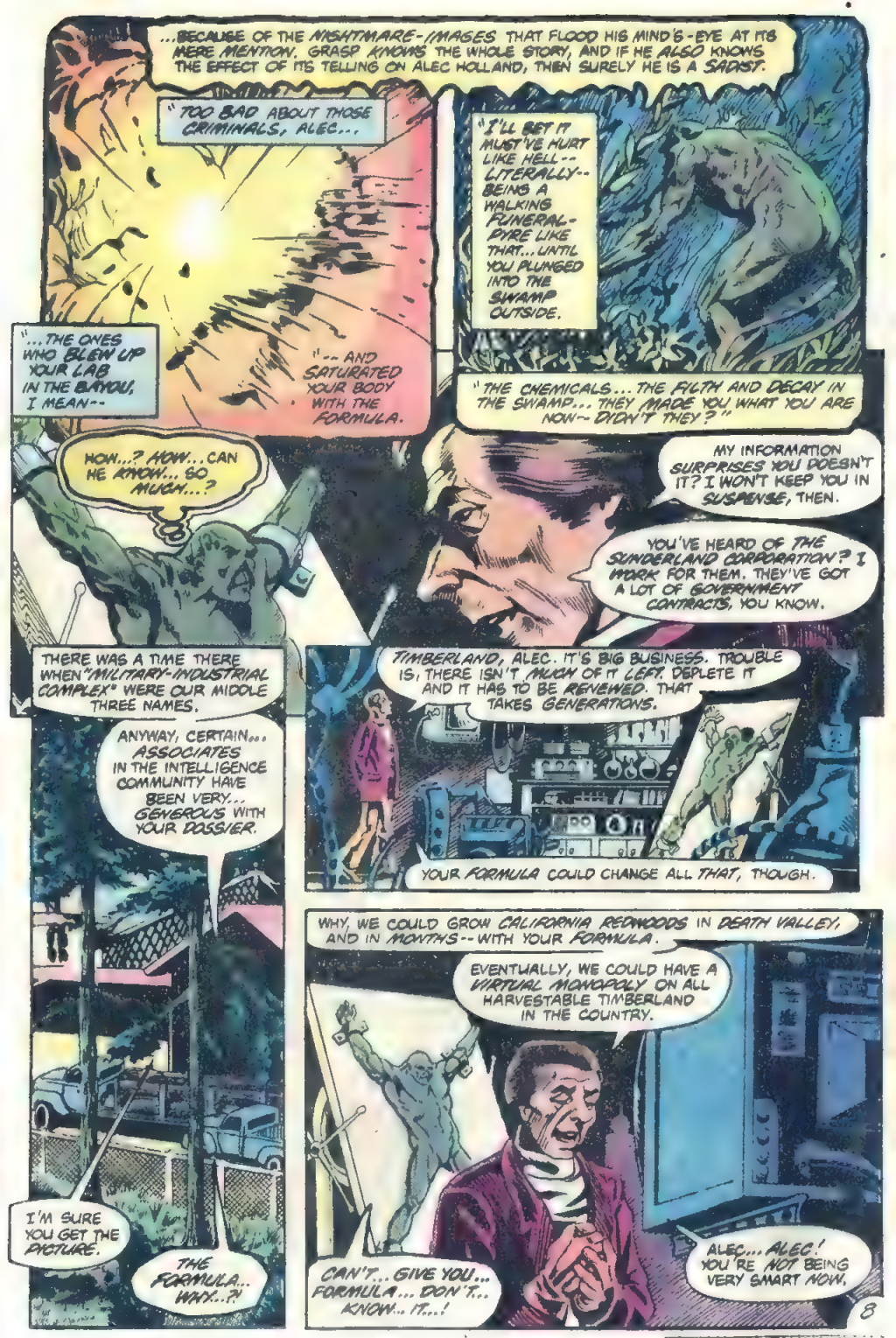
CONTINUED ON PAGE TWENTY-EIGHT

FOR HARRY KAY, IT IS MANNA FROM HEAVEN, THE TURN OF A FRIENDLY CARD, THIS CONFUSION: THE ROAR OF FLAME, THE POUNDING OF PANICKY FEET, THE SCREAMS.
HEEVER! THE FIRE--- ITS SPREADING!
MY STORE! IT'LL GO UP LIKE A TINDERBOX!
AND BENEATH IT ALL, STRANGER NOISES: A DULL, WET SOUND, LIKE MUD SLAPPING RUBBER...
...AND THE CRUNCHING OF BRITTLE BONE.
KAY IS ALMOST UNSEEN AMID THE HELTER-SKELTER. QUICKLY, NEATLY, HIS JOB IS DONE.
FOR NOTHING CAN GIVE VOICE TO THE GIRL'S FIRST SURGE OF TERROR AS THE CHLOROFORM SAPS HER CONSCIOUSNESS.
SO, BY THE TIME THE SWAMP THING'S BATTLE IS ENDED...
CASEY...! GONE...?!
YAAROOOM
TOTLEBEN FUNERAL HOME
KIDNAPPED... BY SOMEONE IN THAT SPORTS CAR...?
BUT WHY...? WHY...?
A QUESTION HE WILL HAVE MORE THAN TIME ENOUGH TO PONDER.
5


THERE ARE FEW ROADS OUT OF LIMBO, AND EVEN FEWER HIGHWAYS ACROSS THE SWAMP-LANDS. IT IS A SIMPLE, IF TEDIOUS, MATTER TO PURSUE THE CAR.
IT IS DAWN WHEN HOLLAND CATCHES UP TO IT. BUT IN ALL THOSE HOURS OF REFLECTION, THE MYSTERY OF CASEY'S ABDUCTION REFUSES TO GIVE UP ITS SECRET.
THERE IT IS... ABANDONED..
...AT THE EDGE OF A CORN-FIELD..?
THE KIDNAPPER MUST VE CONTINUED ON FOOT... THROUGH HERE...
...AND HE TOOK CASEY... WITH HIM, NO DOUBT...!
THE STALKS CLOSE AROUND HIM AS HE WADES DEEPER, TILL HE IS ENGULFED BY YELLOW AND GREEN. AND THEN...
RRRRR
THAT SOUND...! ALL AROUND ME...! WHAT...?
A... CROPDUSTER...?
...HEADING... STRAIGHT FOR ME...!
PILOT MUST NOT... SEE ME...! GONNA GET... A FACEFUL OF... INSECTICIDE...!
NO... NOT BUG-SPRAY...!
DEFOLIANT...?!
AND A PUZZLE HE HAD PONDERED FOR DOZENS OF MILES RESOLVES ITSELF IN SECONDS:
HOLLAND... YOU MORON...! SHOULD'VE BEEN SUSPICIOUS...! IT WAS... TOO EASY... TO FIND THAT CAR...!
IT WAS A SET-UP... A TRAP...!
6


A TRAP INDEED, AS THE MAN-BRUTE LEARNS SOME SIX HOURS LATER, OVER 100 MILES TO THE WEST, WHERE HE RETURNS TO CONSCIOUSNESS, SLAPPRISED TO BE ALIVE.
BUT HE WAS WRONG IN ONE PARTICULAR: HE HAD NOT BEEN BLANKETED BY A DEFOLIANT... BUT, RATHER, AN ANAESTHETIC WHOSE FORMULA WOULD STAGGER EVEN HIS BIOCHEMIST'S IMAGINATION.
GREAT EASTERN MINING & HARVESTING A SUNDERLAND COMPANY
GOOD TO SEE YOU AWAKE.
BEEN LOOKING FORWARD TO MEETING YOU FOR A LONG TIME, ALEC.
YOU ARE AWARE THAT YOUR NAME IS ALEC HOLLAND, AREN'T YOU?
MINE'S GRASP--AS IN WHAT A POET'S REACH SHOULD EXCEED.
NOT MY REAL NAME, OF COURSE. KIND OF A JOKE, ACTUALLY--BETWEEN ME AND MY... AH,, EMPLOYEES. BUT AT LEAST IT IDENTIFIES ME.
GO, ALEC, TELL ME--WHAT'S GOING ON INSIDE YOU RIGHT NOW?
I MEAN, WHAT ARE YOU FEELING? WHAT ARE YOU THINKING?
DO YOU THINK... OR IS IT ALL JUST SO MUCH.. PHOTOSYNTHESIS?
WHAT AM I SEEING IN THOSE EYES? IS THAT INTELLIGENCE?
TELL ME. I WANT TO KNOW. I NEED TO KNOW. YOU HAVE SOMETHING I WANT. AND I AM GOING TO HAVE IT, YOU SEE, SO YOU MIGHT AS W--
THE... GIRL...?
WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW? NOT ONLY STILL INTELLIGENT.. STILL COMPASSIONATE... YOU EVEN TALK. SORT OF.
I'M IMPRESSED.. OH, AND DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE GIRL. SHE'S SAFE. NOT TOO COMFORTABLE, MAYBE, BUT SAFE.
SEE?
KLIK
SHE'LL STAY THAT WAY, TOO--AS LONG AS YOU GIVE ME YOUR FORMULA.
OF COURSE. THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA. THE TERM HE STILL HATES HEARING...
7


...BECAUSE OF THE NIGHTMARE-IMAGES THAT FLOOD HIS MIND'S-EYE AT ITS MERE MENTION, GRASP KNOWS THE WHOLE STORY, AND IF HE ALSO KNOWS THE EFFECT OF ITS TELLING ON ALEC HOLLAND, THEN SURELY HE IS A SADIST.
"TOO BAD ABOUT THOSE CRIMINALS, ALEC...
"...THE ONES WHO BLEW UP YOUR LAB IN THE BAYOU, I MEAN--
"-- AND SATURATED YOUR BODY WITH THE FORMULA.
"I'LL BET IT MUST'VE HURT LIKE HELL-- LITERALLY-- BEING A WALKING FUNERAL-PYRE LIKE THAT... UNTIL YOU PLUNGED INTO THE SWAMP OUTSIDE.
"THE CHEMICALS... THE FILTH AND DECAY IN THE SWAMP... THEY MADE YOU WHAT YOU ARE NOW-- DIDN'T THEY?"
HOW...? HOW... CAN HE KNOW... SO MUCH...?
MY INFORMATION SURPRISES YOU DOESN'T IT? I WON'T KEEP YOU IN SUSPENSE, THEN.
YOU'VE HEARD OF THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION? I WORK FOR THEM. THEY'VE GOT A LOT OF GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS, YOU KNOW.
THERE WAS A TIME THERE WHEN "MILITARY-INDUSTRIAL COMPLEX" WERE OUR MIDDLE THREE NAMES.
TIMBERLAND, ALEC. IT'S BIG BUSINESS. TROUBLE IS, THERE ISN'T MUCH OF IT LEFT. DEPLETE IT AND IT HAS TO BE RENEWED. THAT TAKES GENERATIONS.
ANYWAY, CERTAIN... ASSOCIATES IN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN VERY... GENEROUS WITH YOUR DOSSIER.
YOUR FORMULA COULD CHANGE ALL THAT, THOUGH.
I'M SURE YOU GET THE PICTURE.
THE FORMULA... WHY...?
WHY, WE COULD GROW CALIFORNIA REDWOODS IN DEATH VALLEY, AND IN MONTHS-- WITH YOUR FORMULA.
EVENTUALLY, WE COULD HAVE A VIRTUAL MONOPOLY ON ALL HARVESTABLE TIMBERLAND IN THE COUNTRY.
CAN'T... GIVE YOU... FORMULA... DON'T... KNOW... IT...!
ALEC... ALEC! YOU'RE NOT BEING VERY SMART NOW.

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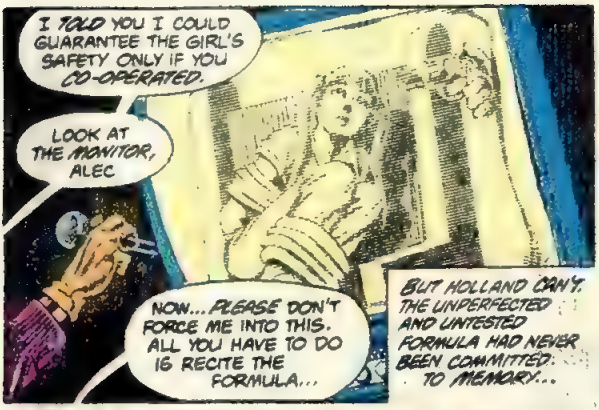
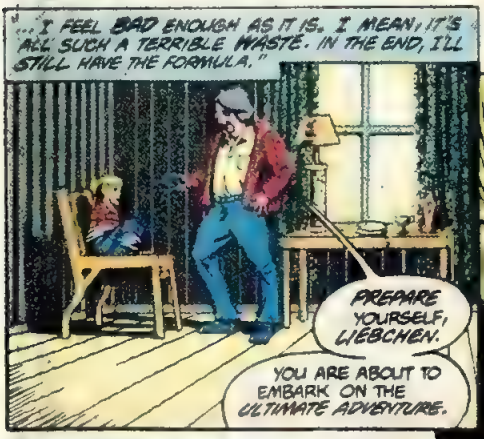
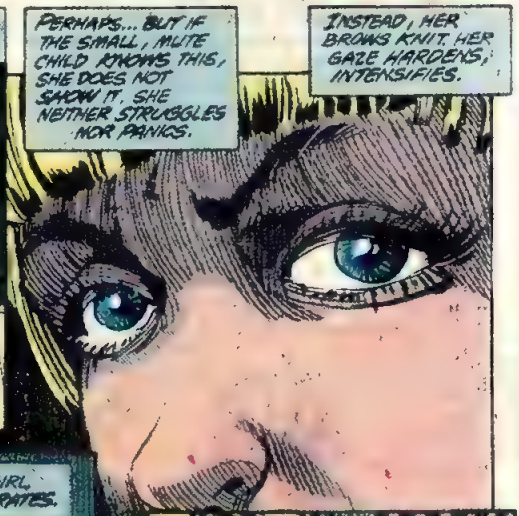

I TOLD YOU I COULD GUARANTEE THE GIRL'S SAFETY ONLY IF YOU CO-OPERATED.
LOOK AT THE MONITOR, ALEC
NOW... PLEASE DON'T FORCE ME INTO THIS. ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS RECITE THE FORMULA...
BUT HOLLAND CAN'T. THE UNPERFECTED AND UNTESTED FORMULA HAD NEVER BEEN COMMITTED TO MEMORY...

... AND WHAT HAD BEEN WRITTEN DOWN WAS LOST WITH THE LAB. THIS GRASP CANNOT KNOW, HOWEVER. AND, AFTER A LONG, TENSE SILENCE, HE HEAVES A REGRETFUL SIGH.
ALL RIGHT, DR. KAY-- KILL THE GIRL.
KLIK
BUT DON'T ASK ME TO WATCH...

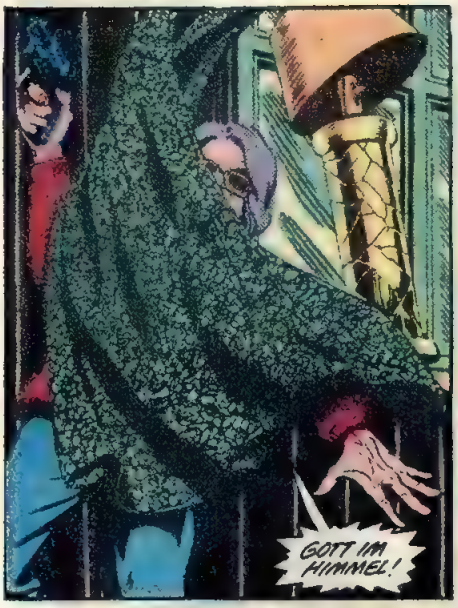

"... I FEEL BAD ENOUGH AS IT IS. I MEAN, IT'S ALL SUCH A TERRIBLE WASTE. IN THE END, I'LL STILL HAVE THE FORMULA."
PREPARE YOURSELF, LIEBCHEN.
YOU ARE ABOUT TO EMBARK ON THE ULTIMATE ADVENTURE.


PERHAPS... BUT IF THE SMALL, MUTE CHILD KNOWS THIS, SHE DOES NOT SHOW IT. SHE NEITHER STRUGGLES NOR PANICS.
INSTEAD, HER BROWS KNIT. HER GAZE HARDENS, INTENSIFIES.

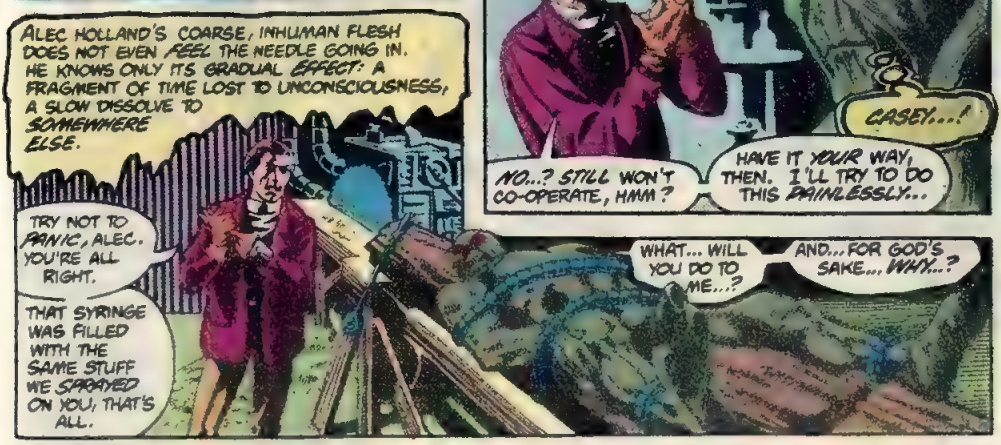
AND HARRY KAY'S FINGER ON THE TRIGGER STIFFENS PAINFULLY. HE CANNOT MOVE IT.
HIS HAND TREMBLES WITH THE EFFORT.
WHAT--?
THE WEAPON MOVES SLIGHTLY. AGAINST HIS WILL.

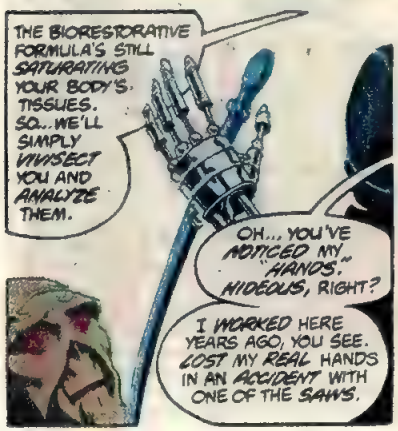
THE GIRL CONCENTRATES.

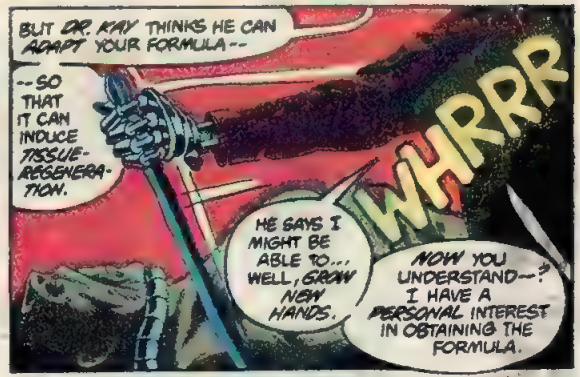
THE DRAPE OVER AN OPEN WINDOW FLUTTERS INWARD, NOISILY. IT DISTRACTS KAY.
OBVIOUSLY, A SUDDEN, FORTUITOUS GUST OF WIND.



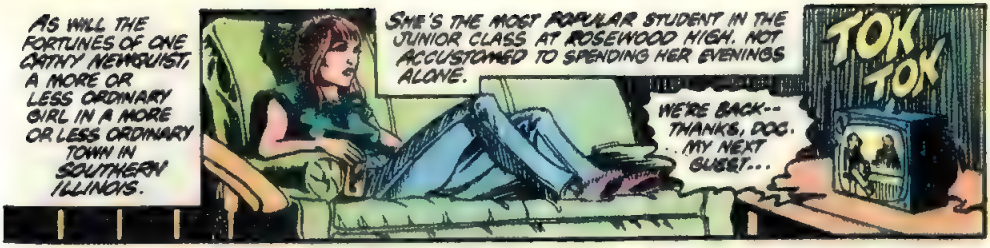
BLAM
DID YOU HEAR THAT, ALEC? DID YOU HEAR WHAT YOU'VE DONE?
MAYBE NOW YOU'LL STOP TRYING TO PLAY THE HERO.
CASEY...!
NO...? STILL WON'T CO-OPERATE, HMM?
HAVE IT YOUR WAY, THEN. I'LL TRY TO DO THIS PAINLESSLY...

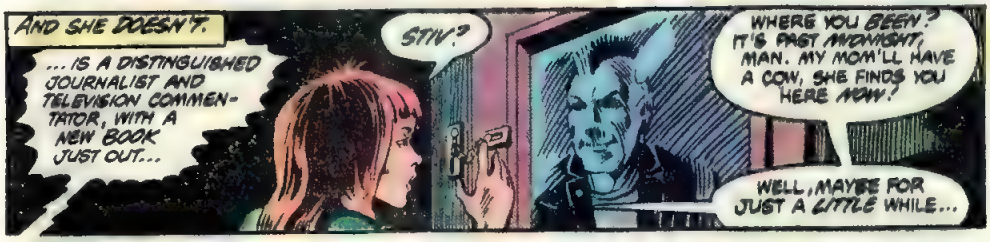

ALEC HOLLAND'S COARSE, INHUMAN FLESH DOES NOT EVEN FEEL THE NEEDLE GOING IN. HE KNOWS ONLY ITS GRADUAL EFFECT: A FRAGMENT OF TIME LOST TO UNCONSCIOUSNESS, A SLOW DISSOLVE TO SOMEWHERE ELSE.
TRY NOT TO PANIC, ALEC. YOU'RE ALL RIGHT.
THAT SYRINGE WAS FILLED WITH THE SAME STUFF WE SPRAYED ON YOU, THAT'S ALL.
WHAT... WILL YOU DO TO ME...?
AND... FOR GOD'S SAKE... WHY...?

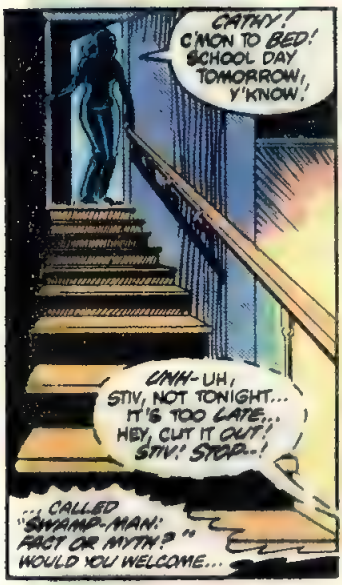

THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA'S STILL SATURATING YOUR BODY'S TISSUES. SO... WE'LL SIMPLY VIVISECT YOU AND ANALYZE THEM.
OH... YOU'VE NOTICED MY "HANDS." HIDEOUS, RIGHT?
I WORKED HERE YEARS AGO, YOU SEE. LOST MY REAL HANDS IN AN ACCIDENT WITH ONE OF THE SAWS.


BUT DR. KAY THINKS HE CAN ADAPT YOUR FORMULA--
--SO THAT IT CAN INDUCE TISSUE-REGENERATION.
WHRRR
HE SAYS I MIGHT BE ABLE TO... WELL, GROW NEW HANDS.
NOW YOU UNDERSTAND--? I HAVE A PERSONAL INTEREST IN OBTAINING THE FORMULA.

AND WITH THE THROWING OF A SWITCH, BOTH A BUZZSAW AND ALEC HOLLAND'S LUCK BEGIN TO TURN.

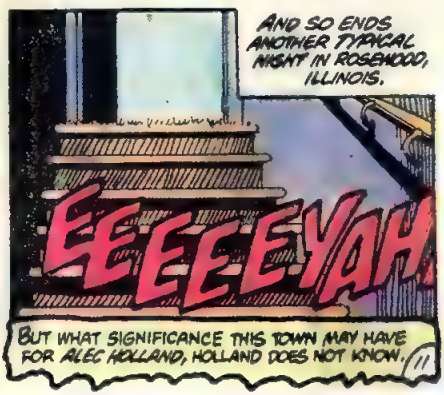

AS WILL THE FORTUNES OF ONE CATHY NEWQUIST, A MORE OR LESS ORDINARY GIRL IN A MORE OR LESS ORDINARY TOWN IN SOUTHERN ILLINOIS.
SHE'S THE MOST POPULAR STUDENT IN THE JUNIOR CLASS AT ROSEWOOD HIGH. NOT ACCUSTOMED TO SPENDING HER EVENINGS ALONE.
TOK TOK
WE'RE BACK-- THANKS, DOC. ..MY NEXT GUEST...


AND SHE DOESN'T.
...IS A DISTINGUISHED JOURNALIST AND TELEVISION COMMENTATOR, WITH A NEW BOOK JUST OUT...
STIV?
WHERE YOU BEEN? IT'S PAST MIDNIGHT, MAN. MY MOM'LL HAVE A COW, SHE FINDS YOU HERE NOW!
WELL, MAYBE FOR JUST A LITTLE WHILE...

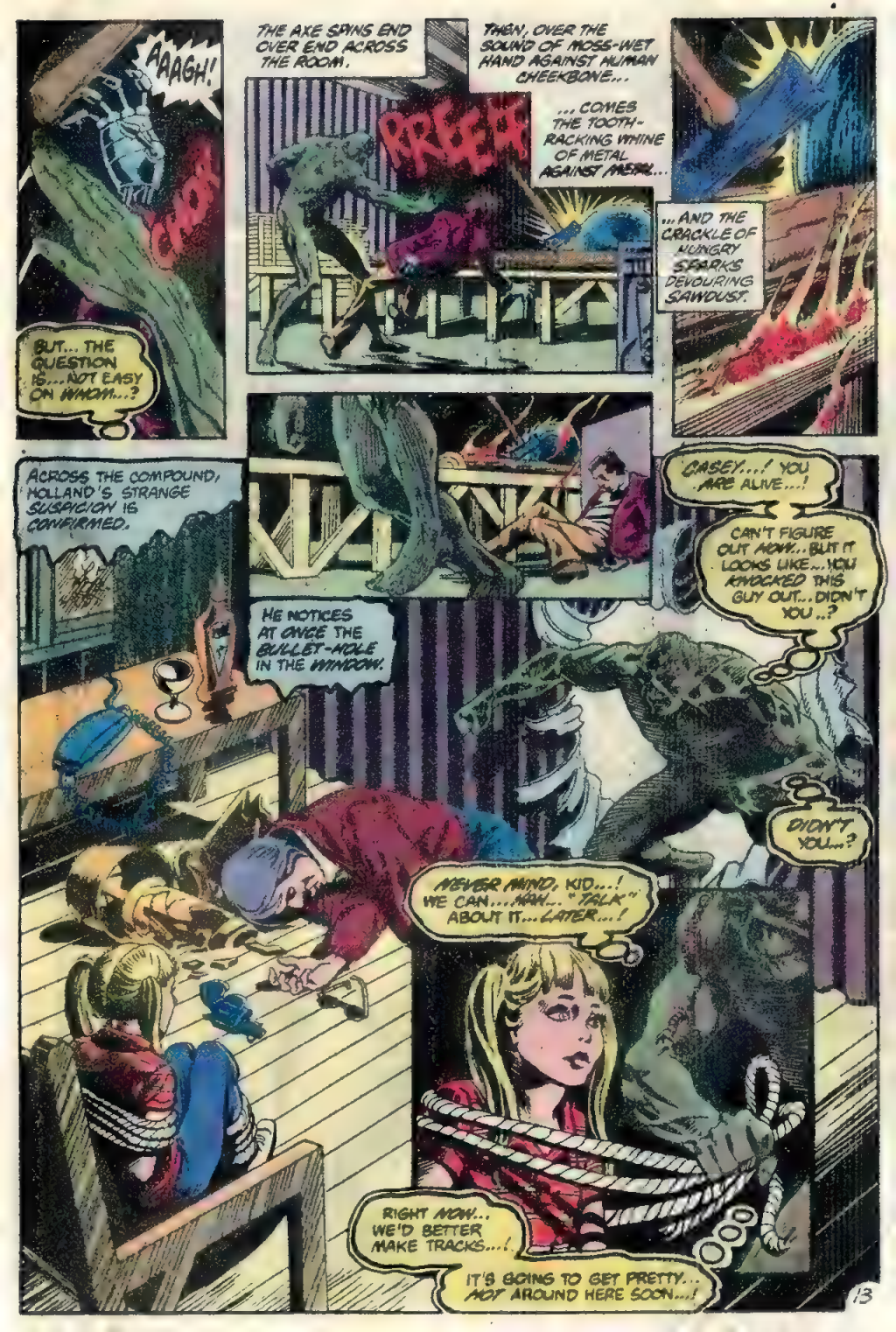

CATHY! C'MON TO BED! SCHOOL DAY TOMORROW, Y'KNOW.
UNH-UH, STIV, NOT TONIGHT... IT'S TOO LATE... HEY, CUT IT OUT, STIV! STOP--!
...CALLED "SWAMP-MAN: FACT OR MYTH?" WOULD YOU WELCOME...

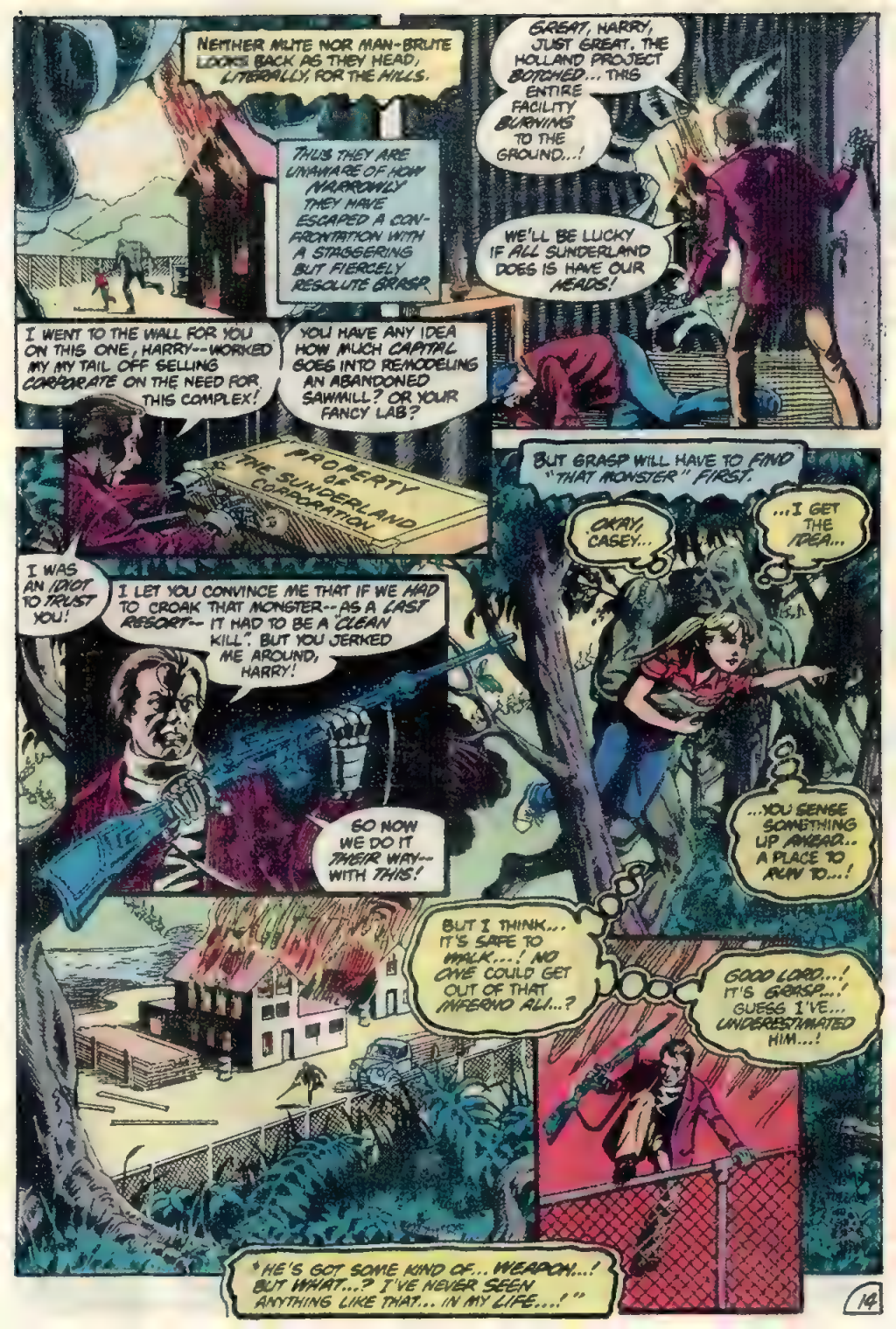
...LIZABETH TREMAYNE...
CATHY!
CATHY?
HONESTLY! WOULDN'T SURPRISE ME THAT GIRL'S GONE STONE DEAF THE WAY SHE LISTENS TO THAT LOUD MUSIC...

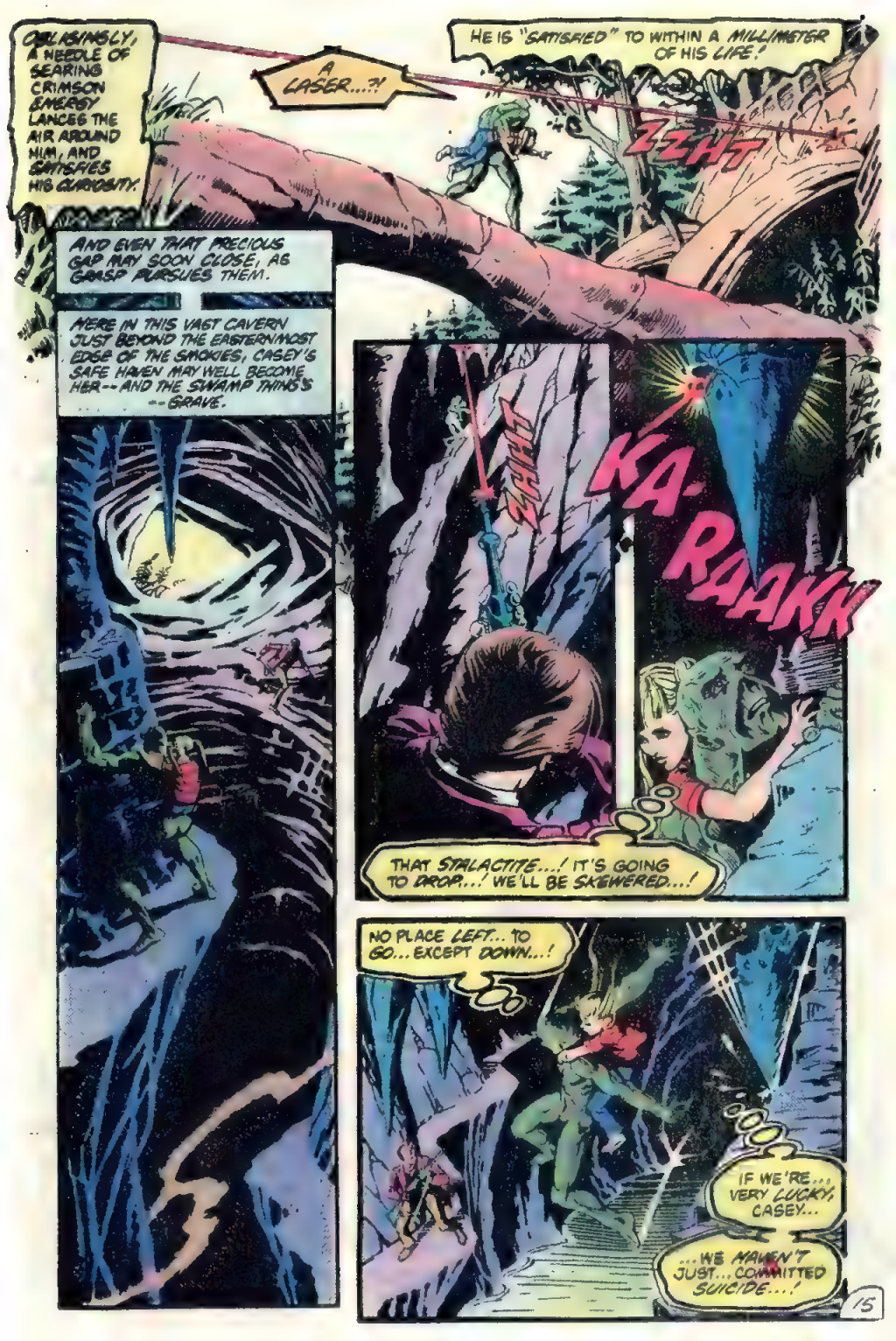
CATHY, WHAT'S THE MATTER WITH--?
CATHY!

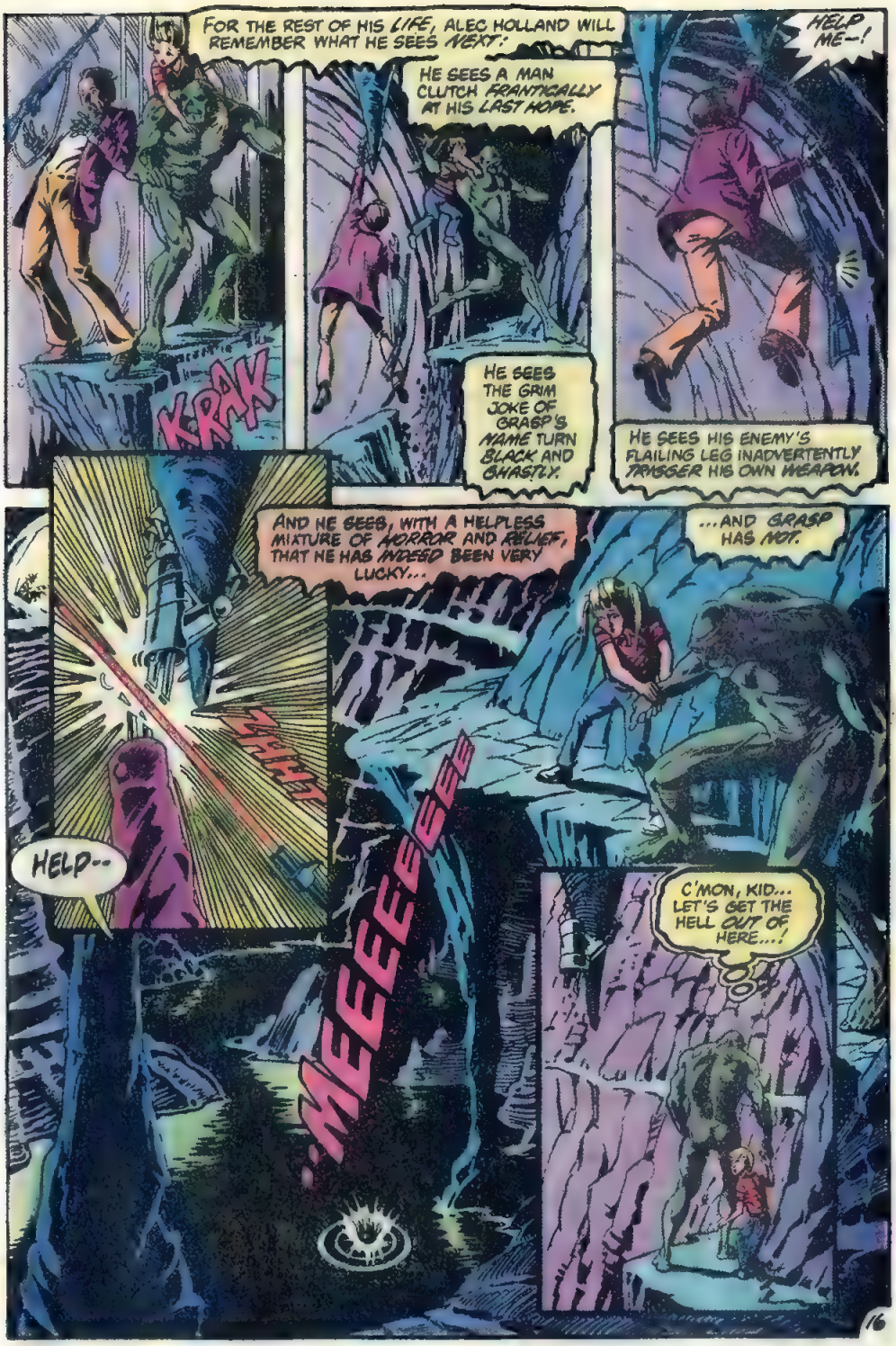

AND SO ENDS ANOTHER TYPICAL NIGHT IN ROSEWOOD, ILLINOIS.
EEEEEYAH
BUT WHAT SIGNIFICANCE THIS TOWN MAY HAVE FOR ALEC HOLLAND, HOLLAND DOES NOT KNOW.

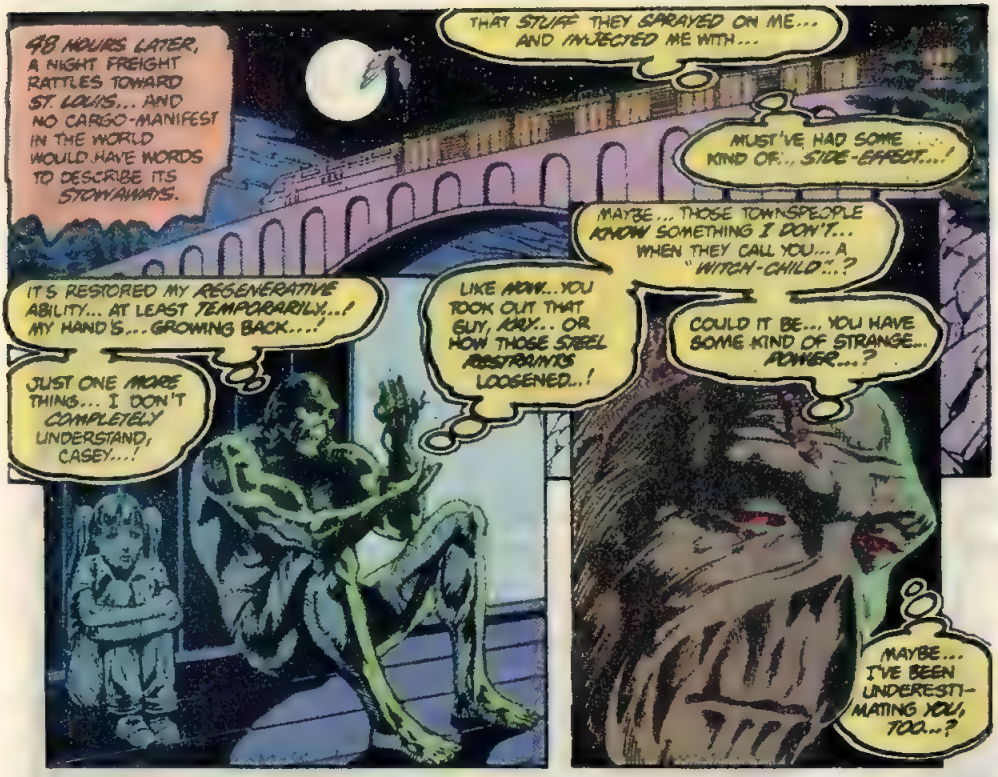
NOT YET.
WE'LL BE ABLE TO RECONSTRUCT THE FORMULA FROM SPECTROGRAPHIC AND MICROPHOTOGRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF YOUR INTERNAL ORGANS, ALEC.
WREEEE
IN A WAY, I'M DOING YOU A FAVOR. YOU'RE DYING ANYWAY.
THAT'S WHY I HAVE TO CUT YOU OPEN. BUT PLEASE BELIEVE ME -- YOU'LL FEEL NO PAIN. THE SAW WILL KILL YOU INSTANTLY.
WHICH IS WHY YOUR HAND ISN'T GROWING BACK. YOUR BODY IS DETERIORATING!
MAYBE... HE'S RIGHT...! MAYBE IT IS BETTER THIS WAY...!
WITH CASEY NEEDING ME... THERE WAS A REASON... TO HANG ON... SOMETHING TO LIVE FOR...!
BUT NOW... SHE'S DEAD...! SO WHY NOT JUST... LET GO...?
THE INTRACTABLE STEEL BANDS ACROSS HIS CHEST ANSWER HIM.
STEEL BANDS THAT ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO MOVE... BUT DO.
THE RESTRAINTS... SLACKENING...! MOVING... BY THEMSELVES...?
CASEY...!
SHE'S ALIVE...! I'M NOT SURE HOW I KNOW THAT... BUT I DO...!
JUST AS I KNOW... I WASN'T MEANT TO DIE... AT LEAST, NOT YET...!
BUT THE PLANS OF THE MAN CALLED GRASP ARE NOT SO OPEN TO REVISION.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DO THAT, ALEC.
YOU WEREN'T SUPPOSED TO BE STRONG ENOUGH ANY MORE.
EVIDENTLY, HARRY MISCALCULATED. TOO BAD. I DIDN'T WANT TO HURT YOU, ALEC -- NOT ANY MORE THAN I HAD TO --
--BUT YOU'RE NOT GOING TO MAKE IT EASY ON YOURSELF, ARE YOU?
NO. GRASP... NOT "EASY"...


AAAGH!
CHOP
BUT... THE QUESTION IS... NOT EASY ON WHOM...?
THE AXE SPINS END OVER END ACROSS THE ROOM.
THEN, OVER THE SOUND OF MOSS-WET HAND AGAINST HUMAN CHEEKBONE...
KREEE
... COMES THE TOOTH-RACKING WHINE OF METAL AGAINST METAL...
...AND THE CRACKLE OF HUNGRY SPARKS DEVOURING SAWDUST.
ACROSS THE COMPOUND, HOLLAND'S STRANGE SUSPICION IS CONFIRMED.
HE NOTICES AT ONCE THE BULLET-HOLE IN THE WINDOW.
CASEY...! YOU ARE ALIVE...!
CAN'T FIGURE OUT HOW... BUT IT LOOKS LIKE... YOU KNOCKED THIS GUY OUT... DIDN'T YOU...?
DIDN'T YOU...?
NEVER MIND, KID...! WE CAN... HOW... "TALK" ABOUT IT... LATER...!
RIGHT NOW... WE'D BETTER MAKE TRACKS...!
IT'S GOING TO GET PRETTY... HOT AROUND HERE SOON...!

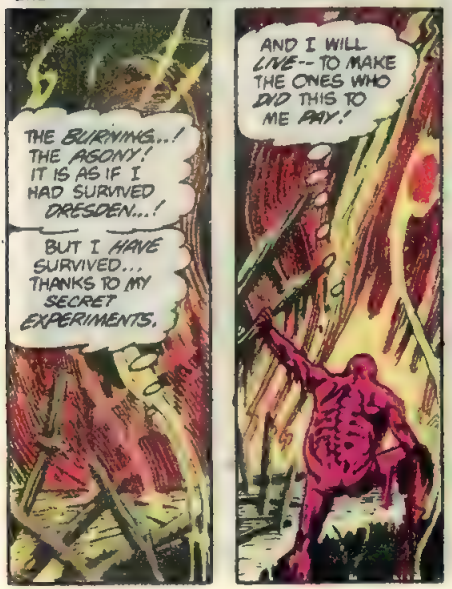

NEITHER MUTE NOR MAN-BRUTE LOOKS BACK AS THEY HEAD, LITERALLY, FOR THE HILLS.
THUS THEY ARE UNAWARE OF HOW NARROWLY THEY HAVE ESCAPED A CONFRONTATION WITH A STASSERING BUT FIERCELY RESOLUTE GRASP.
GREAT, HARRY, JUST GREAT. THE HOLLAND PROJECT BOTCHED... THIS ENTIRE FACILITY BURNING TO THE GROUND...!
WE'LL BE LUCKY IF ALL SUNDERLAND DOES IS HAVE OUR HEADS!
I WENT TO THE WALL FOR YOU ON THIS ONE, HARRY--WORKED MY MY TAIL OFF SELLING CORPORATE ON THE NEED FOR THIS COMPLEX!
YOU HAVE ANY IDEA HOW MUCH CAPITAL GOES INTO REMODELING AN ABANDONED SAWMILL? OR YOUR FANCY LAB?
PROPERTY OF THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION
BUT GRASP WILL HAVE TO FIND "THAT MONSTER" FIRST.
OKAY, CASEY...
...I GET THE IDEA...
I WAS AN IDIOT TO TRUST YOU!
I LET YOU CONVINCE ME THAT IF WE HAD TO CROAK THAT MONSTER--AS A LAST RESORT-- IT HAD TO BE A "CLEAN KILL". BUT YOU JERKED ME AROUND, HARRY!
GO NOW WE DO IT THEIR WAY--WITH THIS!
...YOU SENSE SOMETHING UP AHEAD... A PLACE TO RUN TO...!
BUT I THINK... IT'S SAFE TO WALK...! NO ONE COULD GET OUT OF THAT INFERNO ALI...?
GOOD LORD...! IT'S GRASP...! GUESS I'VE... UNDERESTIMATED HIM...!
"HE'S GOT SOME KIND OF... WEAPON...! BUT WHAT...? I'VE NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT... IN MY LIFE...!"


ORLISMSLY, A NEEDLE OF SEARING CRIMSON ENERGY LANCES THE AIR AROUND HIM, AND SATISFIES HIS CURIOSITY.
A LASER...?!
HE IS "SATISFIED" TO WITHIN A MILLIMETER OF HIS LIFE!
ZZHT
AND EVEN THAT PRECIOUS GAP MAY SOON CLOSE, AS GRASP PURSUES THEM.
HERE IN THIS VAST CAVERN JUST BEYOND THE EASTERN-MOST EDGE OF THE SMOKIES, CASEY'S SAFE HAVEN MAY WELL BECOME HER -- AND THE SWAMP THING'S -- GRAVE.
SHING!
KA-RAAKK
THAT STALACTITE...! IT'S GOING TO DROP...! WE'LL BE SKEWERED...!
NO PLACE LEFT... TO GO... EXCEPT DOWN...!
IF WE'RE... VERY LUCKY, CASEY...
...WE HAVEN'T JUST... COMMITTED SUICIDE...!


FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE, ALEC HOLLAND WILL REMEMBER WHAT HE SEES NEXT:
KRAK
HE SEES A MAN CLUTCH FRANTICALLY AT HIS LAST HOPE.
HE SEES THE GRIM JOKE OF GRASP'S NAME TURN BLACK AND GHASTLY.
HELP ME--!
HE SEES HIS ENEMY'S FLAILING LEG INADVERTENTLY TRIGGER HIS OWN WEAPON.
AND HE SEES, WITH A HELPLESS MIXTURE OF HORROR AND RELIEF, THAT HE HAS INDEED BEEN VERY LUCKY...
...AND GRASP HAS NOT.
ZHHH!
HELP--
MEEEEEEEE
C'MON, KID... LET'S GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE...!


48 HOURS LATER, A NIGHT FREIGHT RATTLES TOWARD ST. LOUIS... AND NO CARGO-MANIFEST IN THE WORLD WOULD HAVE WORDS TO DESCRIBE ITS STOWAWAYS.
THAT STUFF THEY SPRAYED ON ME... AND INJECTED ME WITH...
MUST'VE HAD SOME KIND OF... SIDE-EFFECT...!
MAYBE... THOSE TOWNSPEOPLE KNOW SOMETHING I DON'T... WHEN THEY CALL YOU... A "WITCH-CHILD"...?
IT'S RESTORED MY REGENERATIVE ABILITY... AT LEAST TEMPORARILY...! MY HAND'S... GROWING BACK...!
LIKE HOW... YOU TOOK OUT THAT GUY, KAY... OR HOW THOSE STEEL RESTRAINTS LOOSENED...!
COULD IT BE... YOU HAVE SOME KIND OF STRANGE... POWER...?
JUST ONE MORE THING... I DON'T COMPLETELY UNDERSTAND, CASEY...!
MAYBE... I'VE BEEN UNDERESTIMATING YOU, TOO...?

THE TRAIN CLATTERS ON, AS PERSISTANT AS HOLLAND'S BROODING. PERHAPS THE GIRL DOES NOT NEED HIS PROTECTION. BUT HE MIGHT FEEL DIFFERENTLY COULD HE LOOK BACK AT THE SAWMILL RUBBLE, AND SEE WHAT SHE MIGHT WANT PROTECTION FROM.'

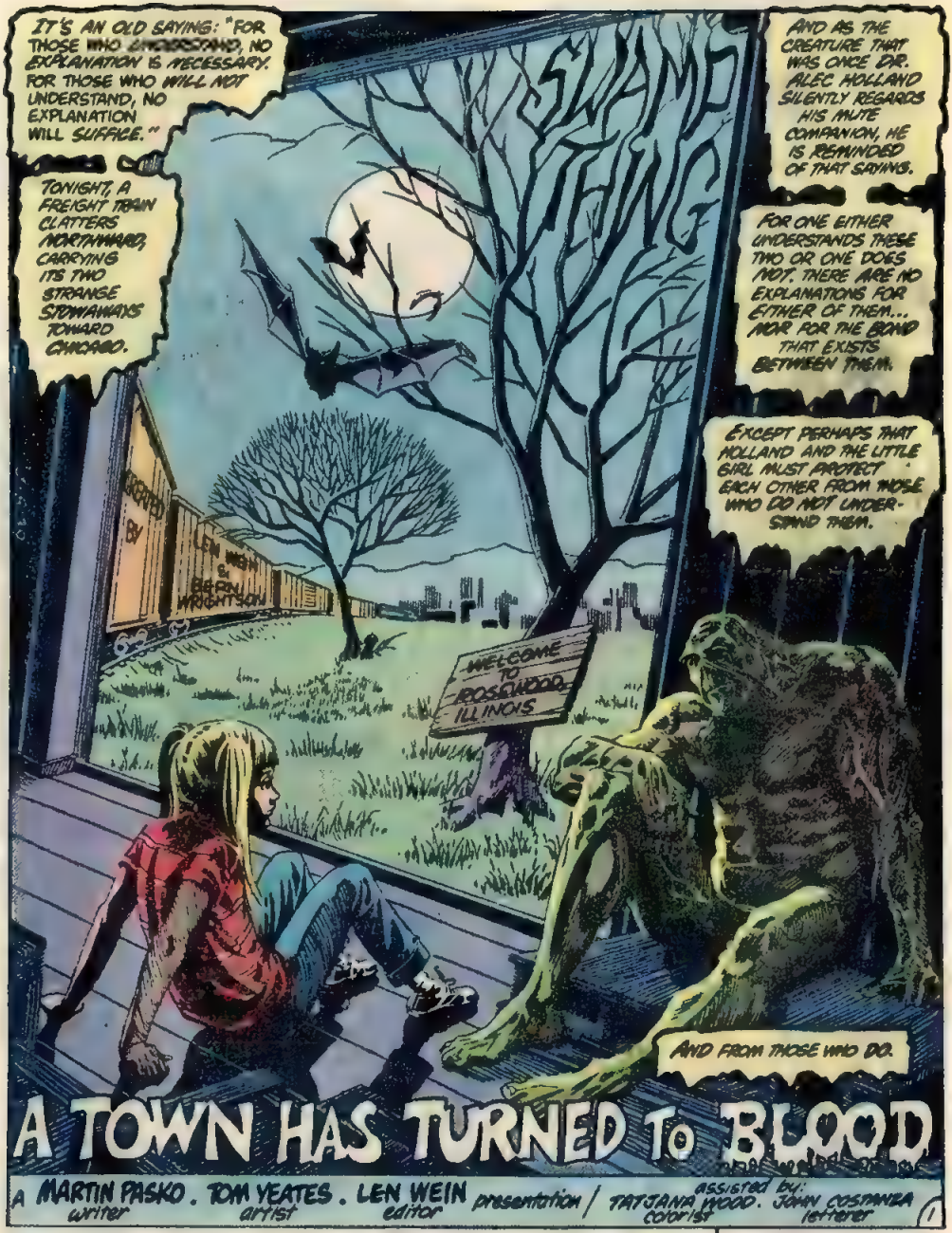

THE BURNING...! THE AGONY! IT IS AS IF I HAD SURVIVED DRESDEN...!
BUT I HAVE SURVIVED... THANKS TO MY SECRET EXPERIMENTS.
AND I WILL LIVE -- TO MAKE THE ONES WHO DID THIS TO ME PAY!

WHILE TO THE WEST...

I DON'T CARE... WHAT YOU MAY BE, CASEY...! I USED TO BE FULL OF HOPE... NO MATTER WHAT I WENT THROUGH...
...BUT I FORGOT HOW TO DO THAT... UNTIL YOU CAME ALONG...!
AND EVEN IF... YOU DON'T NEED ME... I'M WILLING TO STAY WITH YOU... FOR THE REST OF MY LIFE...!
WELCOME TO ROSEWOOD
BUT WHAT I CAN'T PROMISE... IS HOW LONG THAT WILL BE...!

"A TOWN HAS TURNED TO BLOOD"

The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
60¢ U.K. 20p
NO. 3 JULY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
NOW A MAJOR MOTION PICTURE FROM AVCO EMBASSY!
WHERE THE ACTION IS!


SWAMP THING
IT'S AN OLD SAYING: "FOR THOSE WHO UNDERSTAND, NO EXPLANATION IS NECESSARY. FOR THOSE WHO WILL NOT UNDERSTAND, NO EXPLANATION WILL SUFFICE."
TONIGHT, A FREIGHT TRAIN CLATTERS NORTHWARD, CARRYING ITS TWO STRANGE STOWAWAYS TOWARD CHICAGO.
AND AS THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND SILENTLY REGARDS HIS MUTE COMPANION, HE IS REMINDED OF THAT SAYING.
FOR ONE EITHER UNDERSTANDS THESE TWO OR ONE DOES NOT. THERE ARE NO EXPLANATIONS FOR EITHER OF THEM... NOR FOR THE BOND THAT EXISTS BETWEEN THEM.
EXCEPT PERHAPS THAT HOLLAND AND THE LITTLE GIRL MUST PROTECT EACH OTHER FROM THOSE WHO DO NOT UNDERSTAND THEM.
LOADED BY LEN WEIN & BERNI WRIGHTSON
WELCOME TO ROSEWOOD ILLINOIS
AND FROM THOSE WHO DO.
A TOWN HAS TURNED TO BLOOD
A MARTIN PASKO writer . TOM YEATES artist . LEN WEIN editor presentation / TATJANA WOOD coorist . JOHN COSTANZA letterer assisted by:
1

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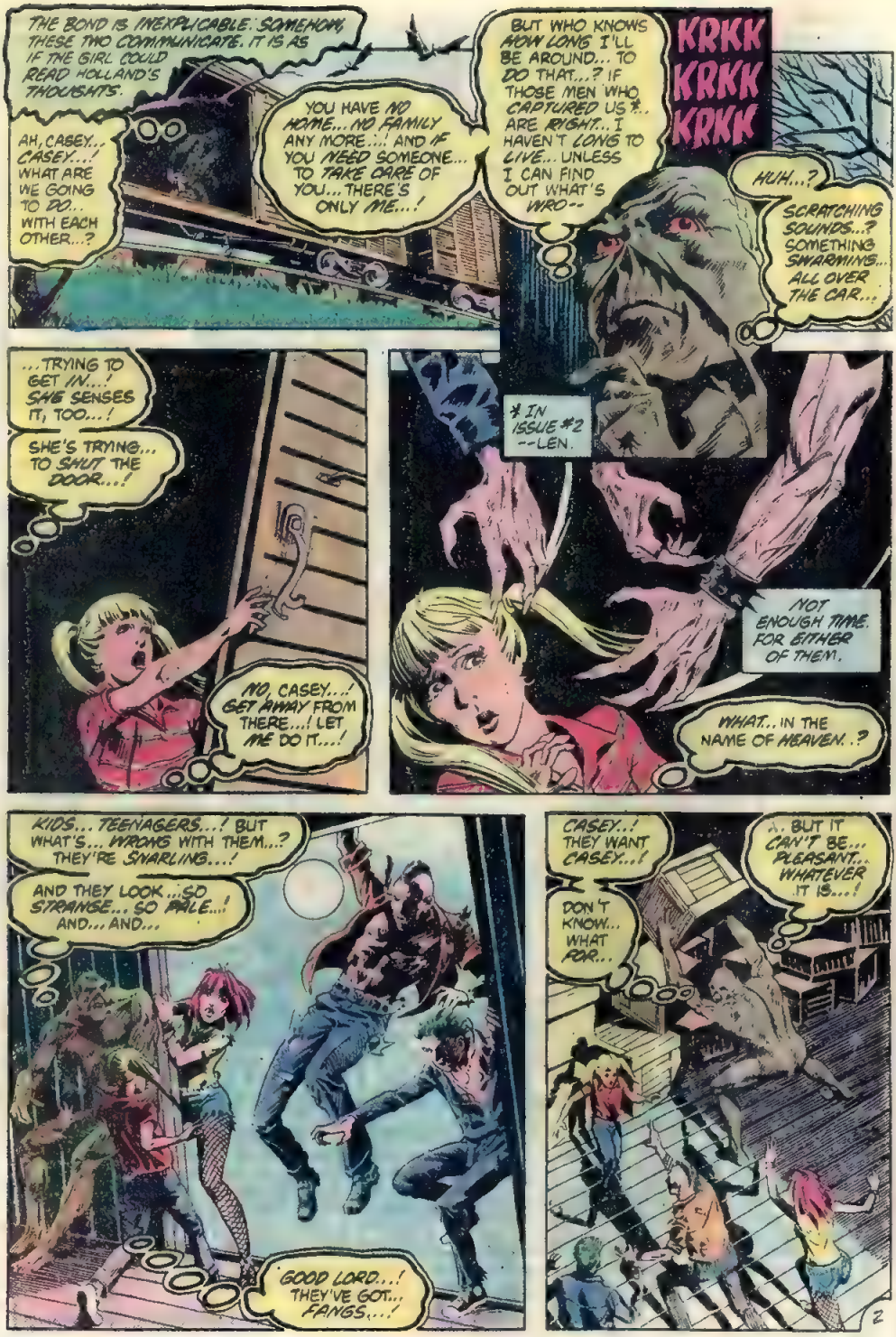
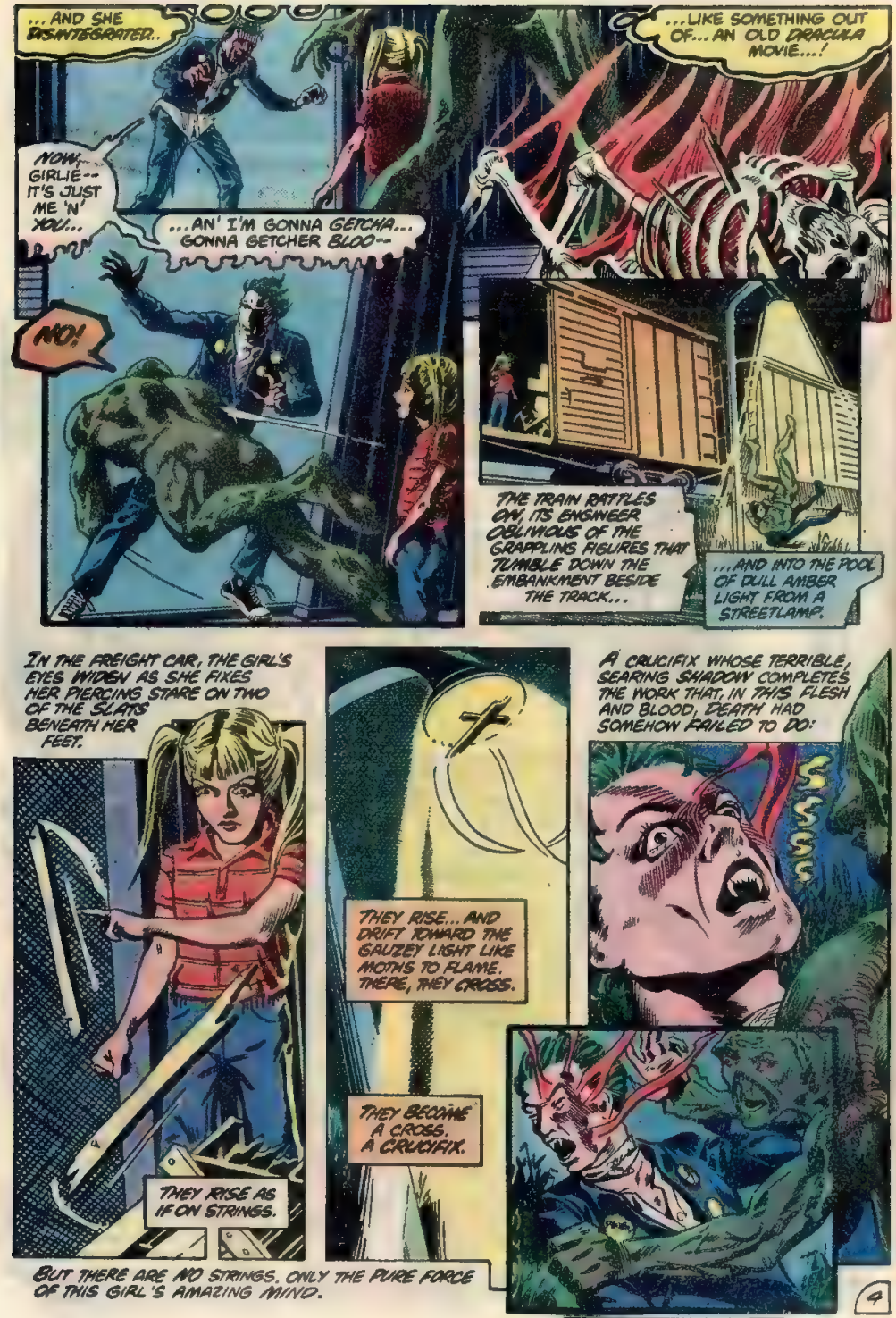

THE BOND IS INEXPLICABLE. SOMEHOW, THESE TWO COMMUNICATE. IT IS AS IF THE GIRL COULD READ HOLLAND'S THOUGHTS.
AH, CASEY... CASEY...! WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO... WITH EACH OTHER...?
YOU HAVE NO HOME... NO FAMILY ANY MORE...! AND IF YOU NEED SOMEONE... TO TAKE CARE OF YOU... THERE'S ONLY ME...!
BUT WHO KNOWS HOW LONG I'LL BE AROUND... TO DO THAT...? IF THOSE MEN WHO CAPTURED US *... ARE RIGHT... I HAVEN'T LONG TO LIVE... UNLESS I CAN FIND OUT WHAT'S WRO--
KRKK KRKK KRKK
HUH...?
SCRATCHING SOUNDS...? SOMETHING SWARMING... ALL OVER THE CAR...
...TRYING TO GET IN...! SHE SENSES IT, TOO...!
SHE'S TRYING... TO SHUT THE DOOR...!
NO, CASEY...! GET AWAY FROM THERE...! LET ME DO IT...!
* IN ISSUE #2 --LEN.
NOT ENOUGH TIME. FOR EITHER OF THEM.
WHAT... IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN..?
KIDS... TEENAGERS...! BUT WHAT'S... WRONG WITH THEM...? THEY'RE SNARLING...!
AND THEY LOOK... SO STRANGE... SO PALE...! AND... AND...
GOOD LORD...! THEY'VE GOT... FANGS...!
CASEY...! THEY WANT CASEY...!
DON'T KNOW... WHAT FOR...
A... BUT IT CAN'T BE... PLEASANT... WHATEVER IT IS...!
2

AND MORE THAN THAT... I DON'T MUCH CARE... TO KNOW...!
STIV!
BASH
HUH...? THE GIRL... BITING MY NECK... GOING FOR MY JUGULAR...!
OR, SHE WOULD BE... IF I HAD ONE...!
WHAT IS THIS...? WHAT DO THEY THINK THEY ARE... VAMPIRES...?!
BEATIN' ON MY OL' MAN, HUH? YOU DIRTY, LOUSY--
BLAGH!: WHAT THE HELL IS THAT JUNK? THAT AIN'T NO BLOOD--!
OH, MY GOD... IT'S TRUE...!
SHE REALLY WAS TRYING.. TO DRINK MY BLOOD...!
BUT SHE DIDN'T REALIZE... I'VE ONLY GOT SAP IN MY VEINS... LIKE A WALKING TREE...! I'M NOT A HUMAN BEING...!
BUT THEN... ACCORDING TO HER OWN SICK, PATHETIC DELUSION ... NEITHER IS SHE....!
SO I DON'T FEEL OBLIGED... TO TREAT HER LIKE ONE...!
REELING UNDER THE SWAMP THING'S BLOW, THE GIRL SLIPS AND FALLS--
--DIRECTLY ONTO A SHARP, UPTURNED WOODEN SLAT FROM THE SMASHED PACKING-CRATE.
SHE IS IMPALED, INSTANTLY.
NO... NO...! IT'S... INSANE...!
THIS... THIS CAN'T BE HAPPENING...!
THE SLAT... IT WENT RIGHT THROUGH HER HEART...


...AND SHE DISINTEGRATED..
...LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF... AN OLD DRACULA MOVIE...!
NOW, GIRLIE-- IT'S JUST ME 'N' YOU...
...AN' I'M GONNA GETCHA... GONNA GETCHER BLOO--
NO!
THE TRAIN RATTLES ON, ITS ENGINEER OBLIVIOUS OF THE GRAPPLING FIGURES THAT TUMBLE DOWN THE EMBANKMENT BESIDE THE TRACK...
...AND INTO THE POOL OF DULL AMBER LIGHT FROM A STREETLAMP.
IN THE FREIGHT CAR, THE GIRL'S EYES WIDEN AS SHE FIXES HER PIERCING STARE ON TWO OF THE SLATS BENEATH HER FEET.
THEY RISE AS IF ON STRINGS.
THEY RISE... AND DRIFT TOWARD THE GAUZEY LIGHT LIKE MOTHS TO FLAME. THERE, THEY CROSS.
THEY BECOME A CROSS. A CRUCIFIX.
A CRUCIFIX WHOSE TERRIBLE, SEARING SHADOW COMPLETES THE WORK THAT, IN THIS FLESH AND BLOOD, DEATH HAD SOMEHOW FAILED TO DO:
SSSSS
BUT THERE ARE NO STRINGS, ONLY THE PURE FORCE OF THIS GIRL'S AMAZING MIND.

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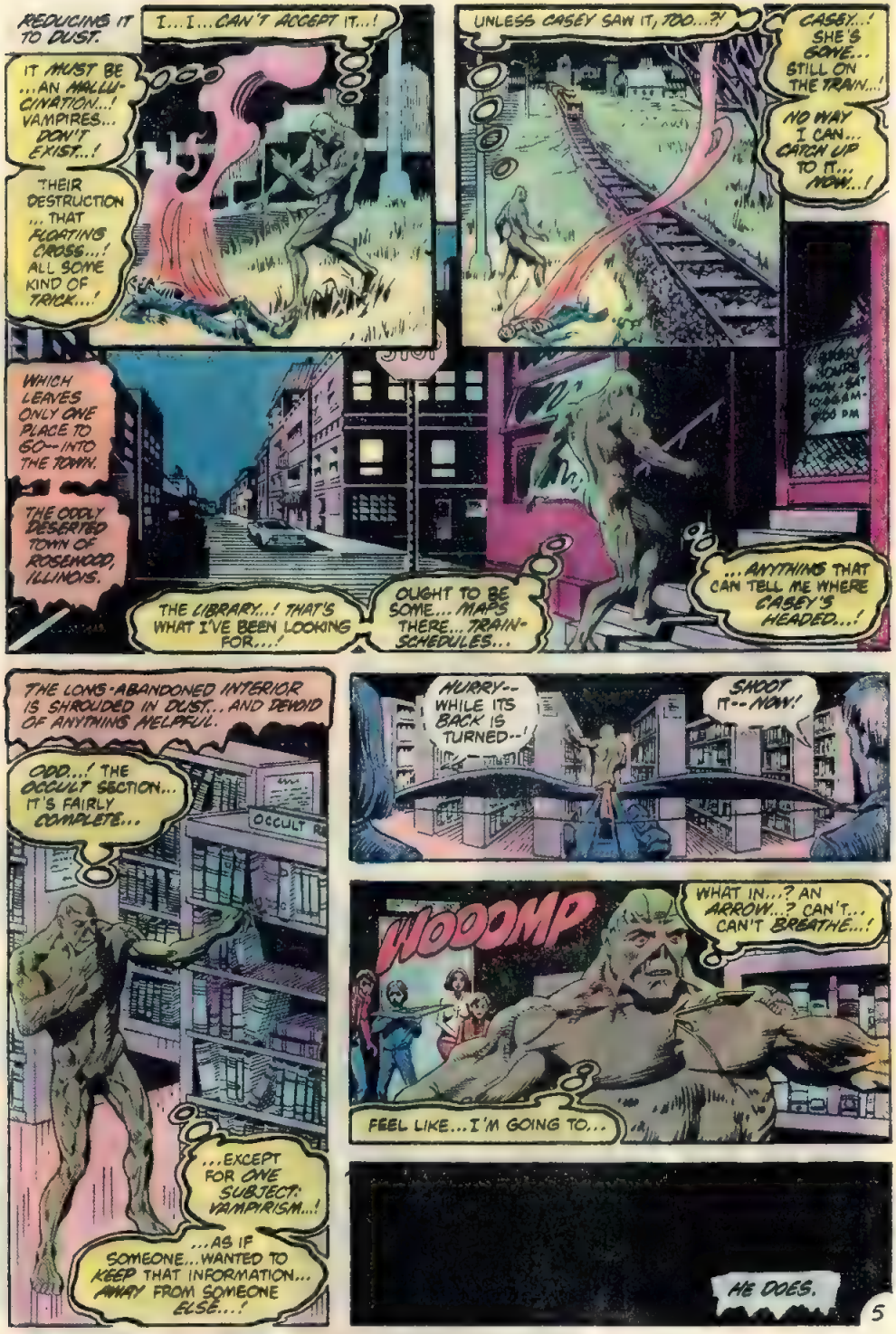
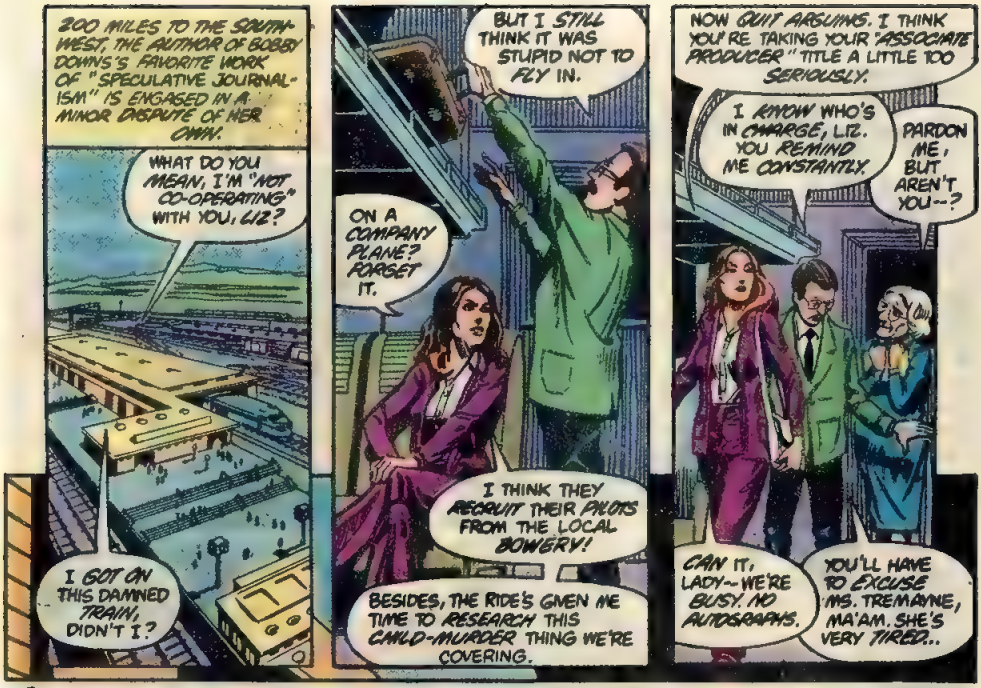
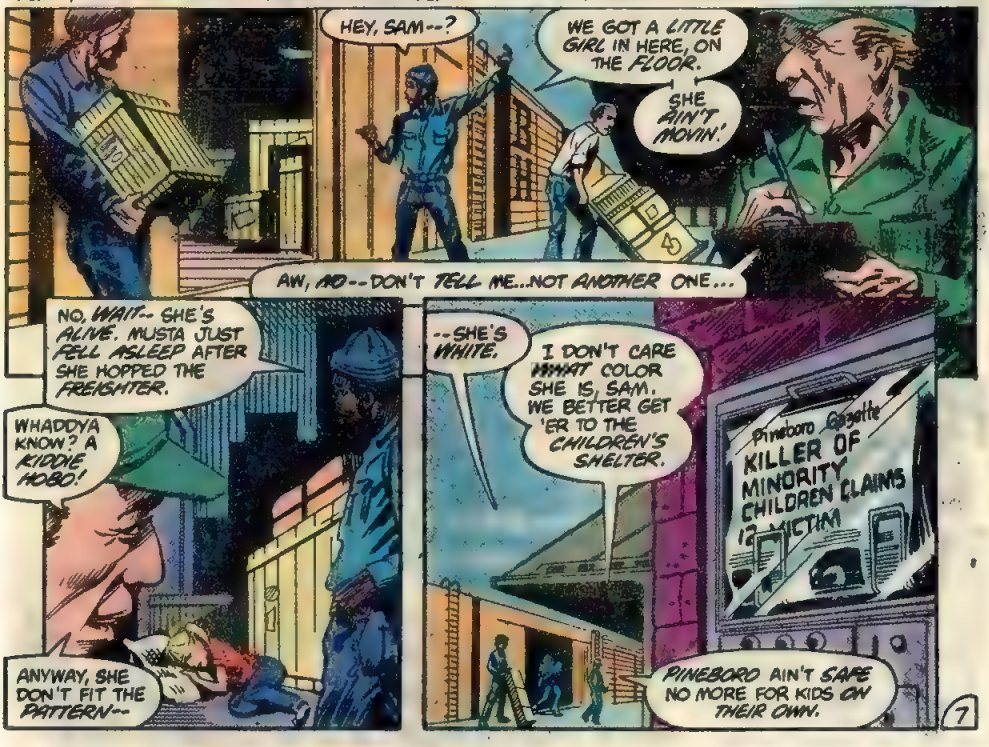

REDUCING IT TO DUST.
I...I...CAN'T ACCEPT IT...!
IT MUST BE ...AN HALLUCINATION...! VAMPIRES... DON'T EXIST...!
THEIR DESTRUCTION ... THAT FLOATING CROSS...! ALL SOME KIND OF TRICK...!
UNLESS CASEY SAW IT, TOO...?!
CASEY...! SHE'S GONE... STILL ON THE TRAIN...!
NO WAY I CAN... CATCH UP TO IT... NOW...!
WHICH LEAVES ONLY ONE PLACE TO GO--INTO THE TOWN.
THE ODDLY DESERTED TOWN OF ROSEWOOD, ILLINOIS.
THE LIBRARY...! THAT'S WHAT I'VE BEEN LOOKING FOR...!
OUGHT TO BE SOME... MAPS THERE... TRAIN-SCHEDULES...
...ANYTHING THAT CAN TELL ME WHERE CASEY'S HEADED...!
THE LONG-ABANDONED INTERIOR IS SHROUDED IN DUST... AND DEVOID OF ANYTHING HELPFUL.
ODD...! THE OCCULT SECTION... IT'S FAIRLY COMPLETE...
OCCULT
...EXCEPT FOR ONE SUBJECT: VAMPIRISM...!
...AS IF SOMEONE... WANTED TO KEEP THAT INFORMATION... AWAY FROM SOMEONE ELSE...!
HURRY-- WHILE ITS BACK IS TURNED--!
SHOOT IT-- NOW!
WOOOMP
WHAT IN...? AN ARROW...? CAN'T... CAN'T BREATHE...!
FEEL LIKE...I'M GOING TO...
HE DOES.

CONSCIOUSNESS RETURNS AMID THE HARSH GLARE OF FLUORESCENTS...
... AND A BABBLE OF CAUTIOUS WHISPERS.
I'M TELLIN' YA, STEVE, HE CAN'T BE ONE OF THEM!
BOBBY'S RIGHT, SON. IF HE WERE, THAT WOODEN ARROW WOULD'VE FINISHED 'IM.
STAND BACK--HE'S MOVING!
UNNH!..
TAKE IT NICE AND SLOW, WHATEVER YOU ARE...
...OR I'LL BLOW YOUR HEAD CLEAN OFF.
DON'T... SHOOT...! WON'T ...HURT YOU...!
THOSE RASPING SOUNDS--THEY'RE WORDS, DAD! THE THING TALKS!
IT'S INTELLIGENT!
MAYBE... BUT THAT STILL DOESN'T MEAN HE'S NOT DANGEROUS.
BUT SLOWLY... PAINFULLY, THE LIVING REMNANTS OF DR. ALEC HOLLAND FORCES MORE WORDS FROM HIS INHUMAN THROAT... AND MANAGES, WITH THE MEAGER AID OF CRUDE SIGN-LANGUAGE, TO CONVEY THAT HE WAS ONCE AS HUMAN AS HIS CAPTORS.
ALL RIGHT, SUPPOSE I BELIEVE YOU. AFTER WHAT I'VE SEEN, I COULD BELIEVE ANYTHING.
I'M LARRY CHILDRESS. THIS IS MY SISTER, HILLARY DOWNS...
THE YOUNGER BOY'S HER SON, BOB, AND ON THE END, THAT'S MY BOY, STEVEN.
SORRY I SHOT YA, MISTER. WE THOUGHT YOU WERE A VAMPIRE.
THEY CAN CHANGE SHAPE, Y'KNOW.
BUT... UH... JUST WHAT ARE YOU, ANYWAY?
IN ANSWER, HOLLAND MERELY POINTS TO THE BOOK IN YOUNG BOBBY'S HAND.
THE SWAMP-MAN--! SEE, STEVE? I TOLDJA HE WAS REAL! THAT'S WHY I BROUGHT THIS BOOK DOWN FROM UPSTAIRS!
I TOLDJA THAT'S WHAT HE WAS!
SWAMP-MAN: FACT OR MYTH?
ZABETH REMAYNE
SUNDERLAND BOOKS


200 MILES TO THE SOUTHWEST, THE AUTHOR OF BOBBY DOWNS'S FAVORITE WORK OF "SPECULATIVE JOURNALISM" IS ENGAGED IN A MINOR DISPUTE OF HER OWN.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN, I'M "NOT CO-OPERATING" WITH YOU, LIZ?
I GOT ON THIS DAMNED TRAIN, DIDN'T I?
BUT I STILL THINK IT WAS STUPID NOT TO FLY IN.
ON A COMPANY PLANE? FORGET IT.
I THINK THEY RECRUIT THEIR PILOTS FROM THE LOCAL BOWERY!
BESIDES, THE RIDE'S GIVEN ME TIME TO RESEARCH THIS CHILD-MURDER THING WE'RE COVERING.
NOW QUIT ARGUING. I THINK YOU'RE TAKING YOUR "ASSOCIATE PRODUCER" TITLE A LITTLE TOO SERIOUSLY.
I KNOW WHO'S IN CHARGE, LIZ. YOU REMIND ME CONSTANTLY.
PARDON ME, BUT AREN'T YOU--?
CAN IT, LADY--WE'RE BUSY. NO AUTOGRAPHS.
YOU'LL HAVE TO EXCUSE MS. TREMAYNE, MA'AM. SHE'S VERY TIRED..

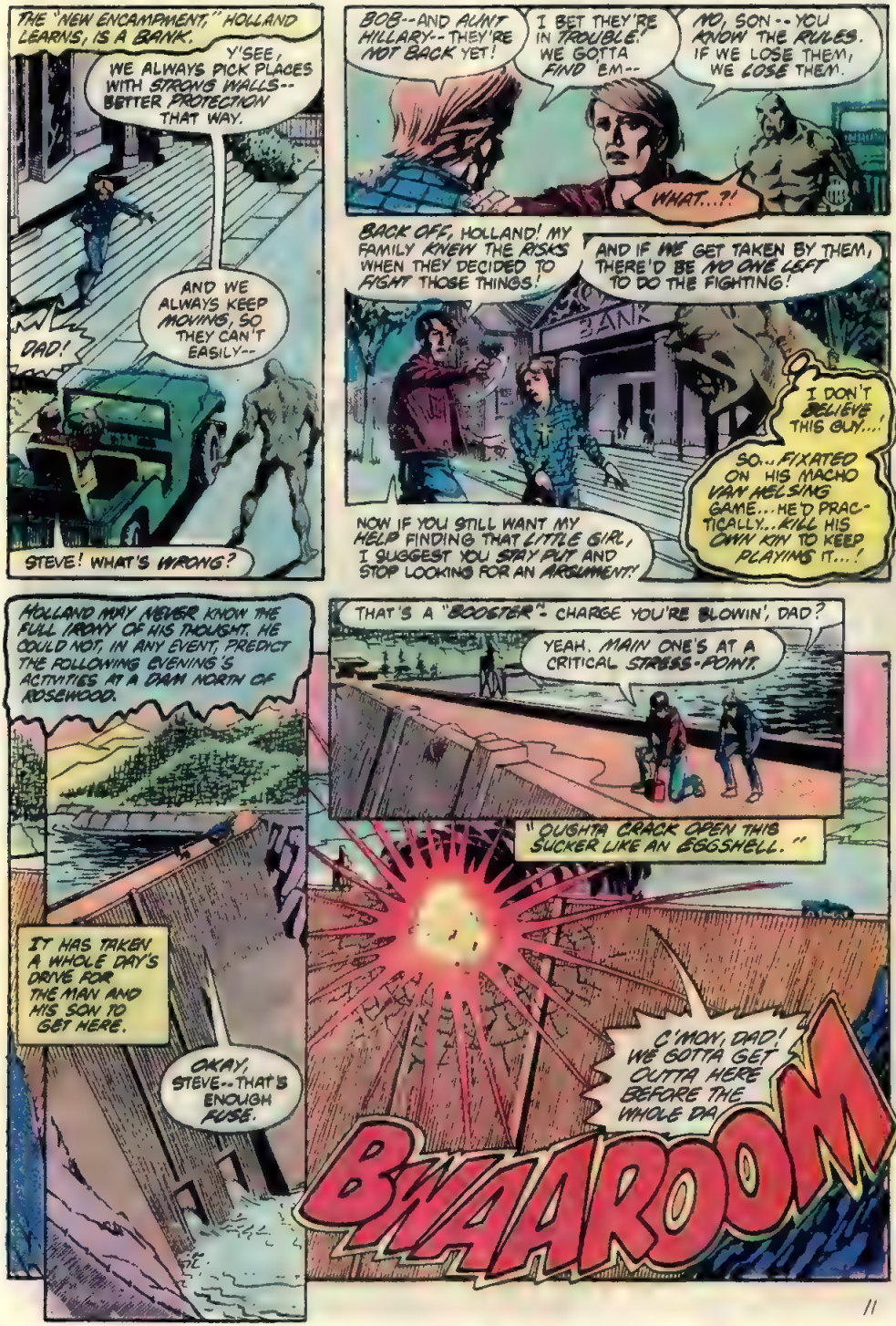
BUT IF THE BEST-SELLING AUTHOR AND TV- "NEWSMAGAZINE" HOSTESS WERE TO STOP AT THE FREIGHT-DEPOT, SHE MIGHT WANT TO FOREGO HER SLEEP TO COVER THE HUMAN-INTEREST STORY BREAKING THERE.

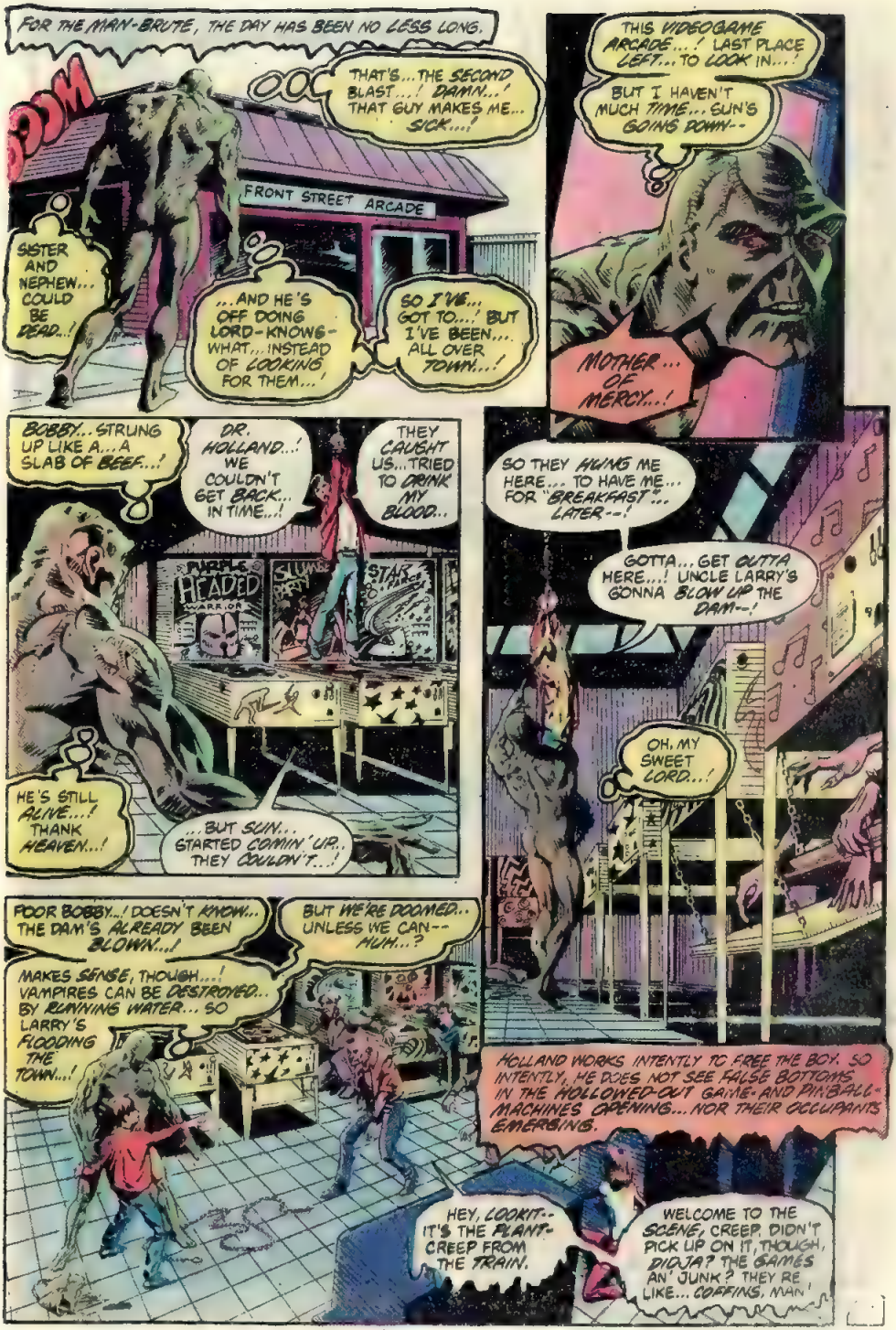

HEY, SAM--?
WE GOT A LITTLE GIRL IN HERE, ON THE FLOOR.
SHE AIN'T MOVIN'
AW, AD--DON'T TELL ME...NOT ANOTHER ONE...
NO, WAIT-- SHE'S ALIVE. MUSTA JUST FELL ASLEEP AFTER SHE HOPPED THE FREIGHTER.
WHADDYA KNOW? A KIDDIE HOBO!
ANYWAY, SHE DON'T FIT THE PATTERN--
--SHE'S WHITE.
I DON'T CARE WHAT COLOR SHE IS, SAM. WE BETTER GET 'ER TO THE CHILDREN'S SHELTER.
Pineboro Gazette
KILLER OF MINORITY CHILDREN CLAIMS 12 VICTIM
PINEBORO AIN'T SAFE NO MORE FOR KIDS ON THEIR OWN.

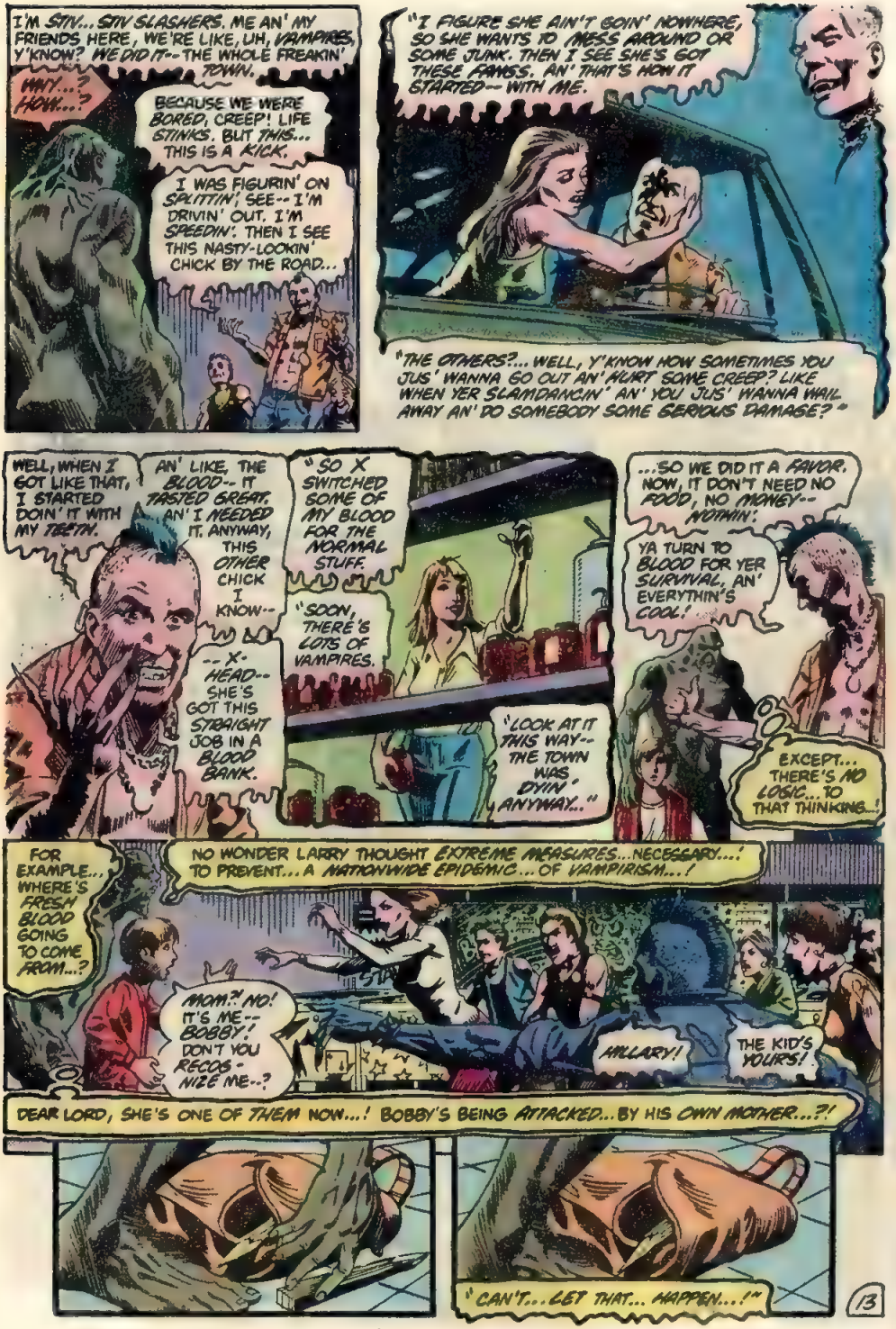
ROSEWOOD, ON THE OTHER HAND, IS NOT SAFE FOR ANYONE-- AT LEAST, NOT AT NIGHT. BUT BEFORE HOLLAND'S CAPTORS WOULD EXPLAIN, THEY DEMANDED HIS STORY.
AND SO, THROUGH A LONG, DIFFICULT NIGHT, HE TOLD IT! IGNITED CHEMICALS, BURNING HIS BODY MINGLED WITH THE FILTH OF A SWAMP INTO WHICH HE'D PLUNGED TO DOUSE THE FLAMES...
...AND GAVE BIRTH TO A SWAMP THING.
NOW, IN THE SAFETY OF DAYLIGHT, HE LEARNS OF HOW HUMAN LIFE HAD BEEN VIRTUALLY WIPED OUT HERE-- LEAVING ONLY...
...US! EVERY MORNING, WE GO OUT AND TRY TO DESTROY EVERY VAMPIRE WE CAN FIND.
BUT... HOW DID...?
NOBODY KNOWS HOW IT HAPPENED. MUST'VE BEEN GOING ON FOR MONTHS. FINALLY, THREE DAYS AGO, EVERYTHING SHUT DOWN.
THE LAST PEOPLE ALIVE-- EXCEPT US-- RAN AWAY!
THE VAMPIRES HAVE EFFECTIVELY TAKEN OVER THE WHOLE TOWN. THEY'VE CUT OFF ALL CONTACT WITH THE OUTSIDE WORLD--
I'M SURE HE GETS THE IDEA, LARRY. YOU SEE, DR. HOLLAND, MY BROTHER IS A... A "GHOST-HUNTER." HE'S USED TO THINGS LIKE THIS.
ROSEWOOD PUBLIC LIBRARY
MOM WAS ABLE TO CONTACT HIM BEFORE WE GOT TOO ISOLATED HERE.
NOT THAT WE WEREN'T ISOLATED BEFORE. A NEW HIGHWAY WAS S'POSED TO CONNECT US WITH SPRINGFIELD--
-- EXCEPT FOR THE TRAIN. EVERY NOW AND THEN, A TRAMP RIDES THROUGH--
BUT THE PROJECT WAS ABANDONED, BUDGET-CUTS --YOU KNOW HOW THAT IS.
BUT EVEN IF WE COULD'VE ASKED FOR OUTSIDE HELP...
...WHO WOULD'VE BELIEVED US?
BOBBY, YOU AND YOUR MOM COVER THE NORTH SIDE TODAY. STEVE, YOU STAY AND GUARD THE CAMP.
I WOULDN'T BLAME YOU FOR THINKING WE'RE CRAZY, HOLLAND--
NO.. I SAW.. THEM...!
LET.. ME.. HELP.!
HMM... ACTUALLY, THERE IS SOMETHING YOU CAN DO-- IF YOU COME WITH ME...
8
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

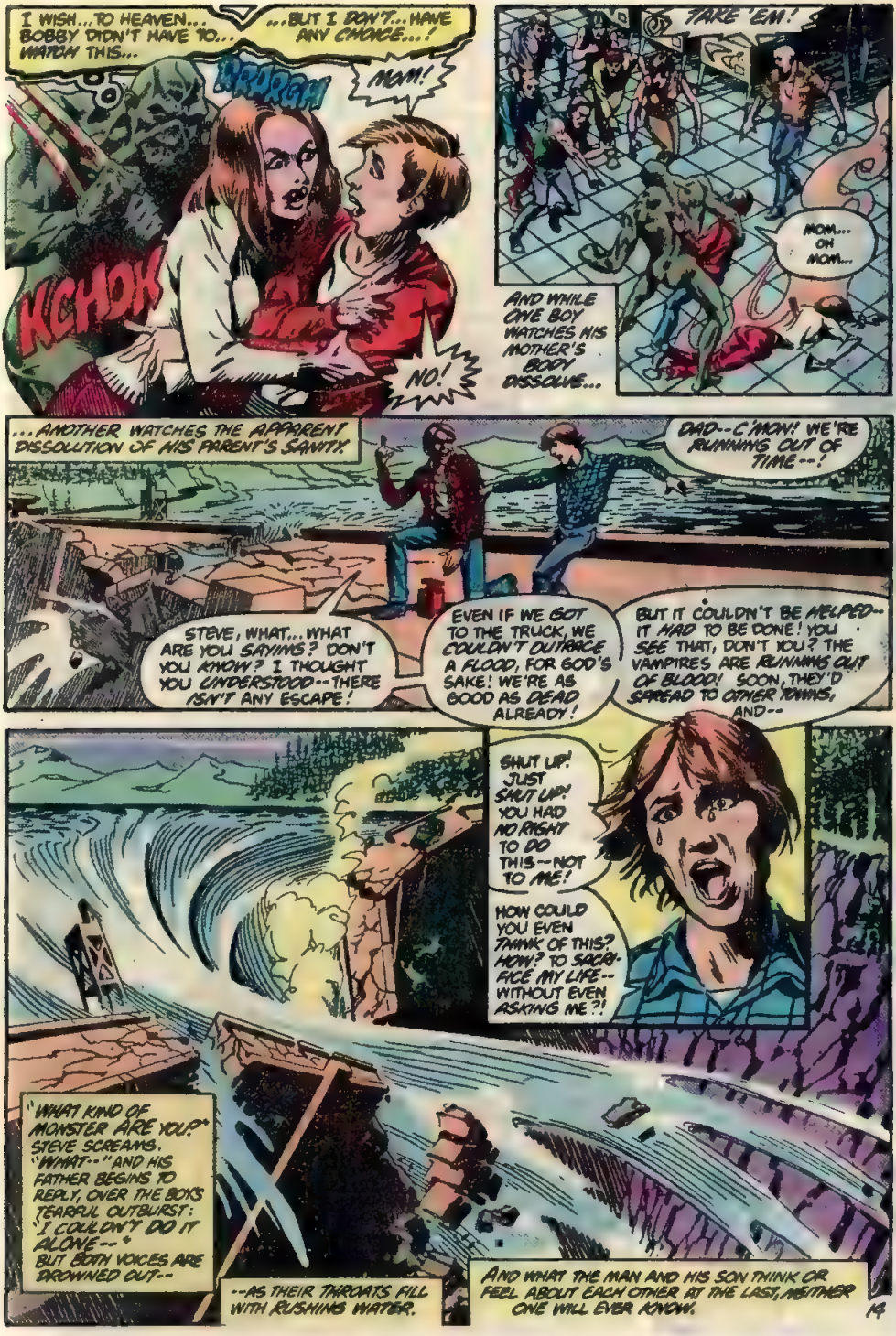
"...TO THE OLD LIMESTONE QUARRY."
THE BLASTING FOREMAN'S SHACK IS OVER THERE, HOLLAND.
YOU'D BETTER HURRY. NIGHT'S COMING ON.
NO TRESPASSING
PROPERTY OF GREAT EASTERN MINING AND HARVESTING A SUNDERLAND COMPANY
THAT CHILDRESS...! DON'T KNOW IF HE'S BEING CARE-FUL...
...OR JUST PARA-NOID...!
HE'S TESTING ME... TO SEE IF HE CAN... TRUST ME...!
HE AND HIS... "CINDERSROUND"... ARE THE ONLY ONES... WHO CAN TELL ME THAT FREIGHT TRAIN'S ROUTE...! AND, CLEARLY THEY WON'T...
...UNLESS I DO AS THEY ASK... AND GET THEM SOME DYNAMITE... AND BLASTING CAPS...!
I DON'T KNOW... WHAT THEY WANT THEM FOR...
...BUT IF IT MEANS ...NOT FINDING CASEY... I WON'T ASK...!
OUTSIDE, LARRY CHILDRESS WAITS, NERVOUSLY SHIFTING HIS KNAPSACK FILLED WITH WEAPONS. DARKNESS FALLS AROUND HIM.
HE IS NOT ALONE.
SMAAK
AAAAGHH
9

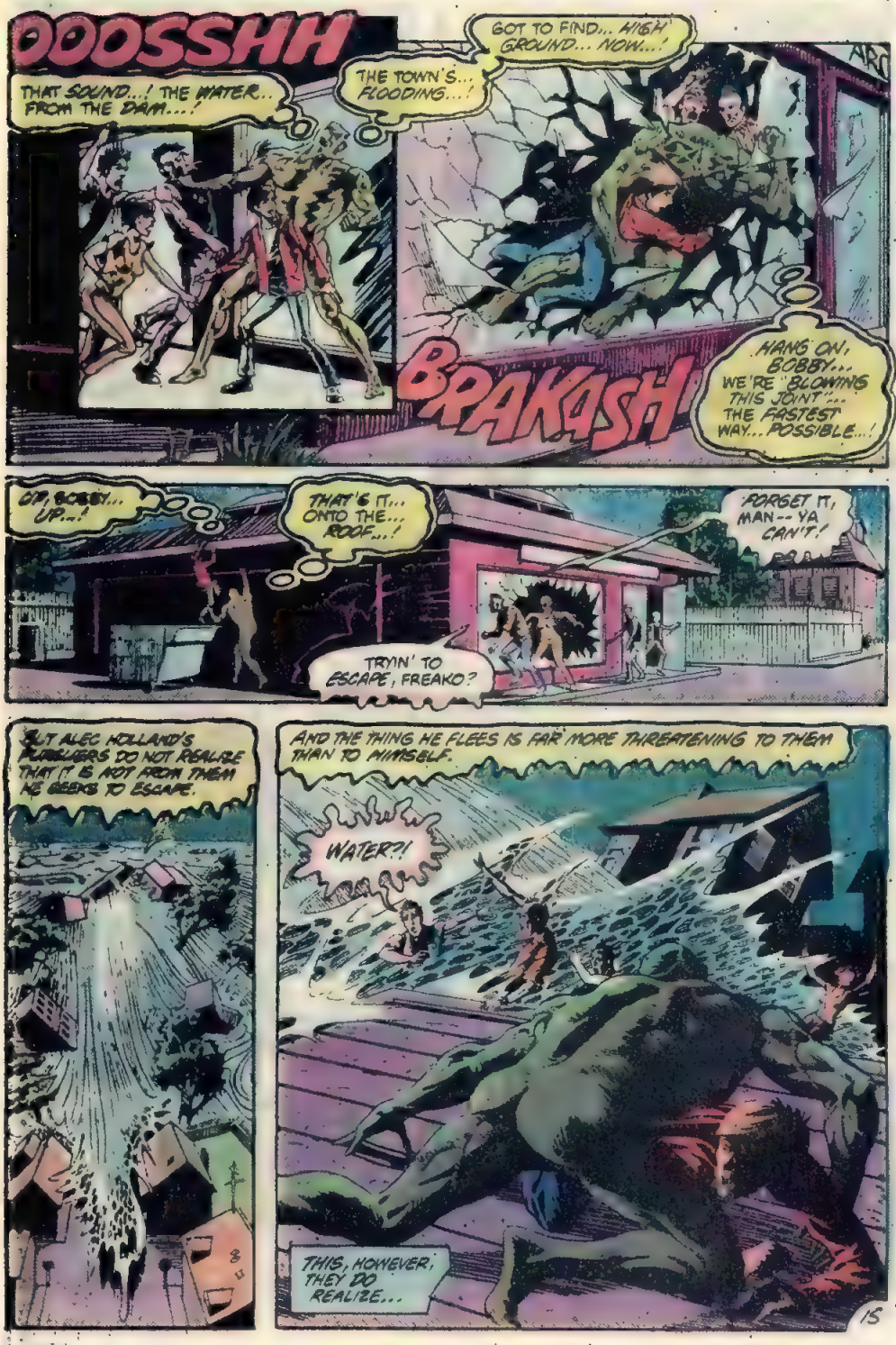
THE CREATURE'S ASSAULT HURLS HIM TO THE GROUND. EVEN ON INSTINCT, HIS FINGERS BARELY FIND THE CRUCIFIX AT HIS THROAT.
YAAAAH
JUST AS INSTINCTIVELY, HIS OTHER HAND GROPES FOR ONE OF THE OBJECTS SCATTERED FROM HIS KNAPSACK.
A STAKE.
HOLLAND RETURNS ONLY IN TIME TO HEAR THE HORRIBLE WAIL OF AGONY.
KCHOK
MORE VAMPIRES...! ADULTS THIS TIME...!
BUT THEN HE SEES IT--A SOMETHING ELSE THAT HAS FALLEN FROM CHILDRESS'S BACKPACK:
EEEA
HOLY WATER...?! *
* WATER THAT HAS BEEN BLESSED BY A PRIEST.--LEN.
AAA
AND AS THE EVENING BLACKENS TO FULL DARK, THERE ARE NOW TWO MOUNDS OF ASH WHERE THERE HAD BEEN ONLY STRIP-MINED LIMESTONE.
C'MON, HOLLAND...
THE OTHERS MUST'VE SET UP TONIGHT'S ENCAMPMENT BY NOW.
I WANT TO BE THERE BEFORE ALL THOSE THINGS ARE ON THE PROWL...
10

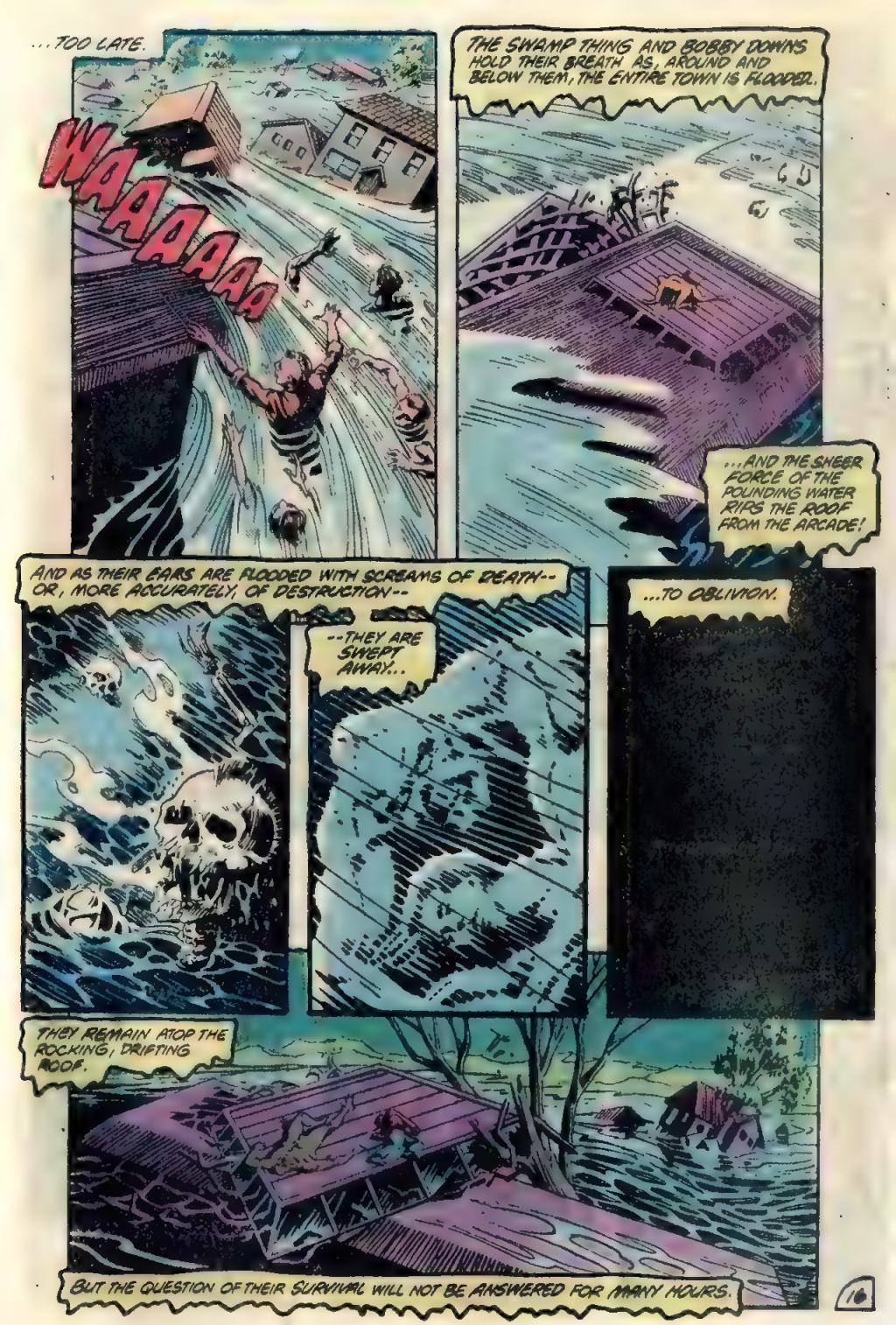

THE "NEW ENCAMPMENT," HOLLAND LEARNS, IS A BANK.
Y'SEE, WE ALWAYS PICK PLACES WITH STRONG WALLS--BETTER PROTECTION THAT WAY.
AND WE ALWAYS KEEP MOVING, SO THEY CAN'T EASILY--
DAD!
STEVE! WHAT'S WRONG?
BOB--AND AUNT HILLARY--THEY'RE NOT BACK YET!
I BET THEY'RE IN TROUBLE! WE GOTTA FIND 'EM--
NO, SON--YOU KNOW THE RULES. IF WE LOSE THEM, WE LOSE THEM.
WHAT...?!
BACK OFF, HOLLAND! MY FAMILY KNEW THE RISKS WHEN THEY DECIDED TO FIGHT THOSE THINGS!
AND IF WE GET TAKEN BY THEM, THERE'D BE NO ONE LEFT TO DO THE FIGHTING!
BANK
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS GUY....
SO...FIXATED ON HIS MACHO VAN HELSING GAME...HE'D PRACTICALLY...KILL HIS OWN KIN TO KEEP PLAYING IT...!
NOW IF YOU STILL WANT MY HELP FINDING THAT LITTLE GIRL, I SUGGEST YOU STAY PUT AND STOP LOOKING FOR AN ARGUMENT!
HOLLAND MAY NEVER KNOW THE FULL IRONY OF HIS THOUGHT. HE COULD NOT, IN ANY EVENT, PREDICT THE FOLLOWING EVENING'S ACTIVITIES AT A DAM NORTH OF ROSEWOOD.
IT HAS TAKEN A WHOLE DAY'S DRIVE FOR THE MAN AND HIS SON TO GET HERE.
OKAY, STEVE--THAT'S ENOUGH FUSE.
THAT'S A "BOOSTER"- CHARGE YOU'RE BLOWIN', DAD?
YEAH. MAIN ONE'S AT A CRITICAL STRESS-POINT.
"OUGHTA CRACK OPEN THIS SUCKER LIKE AN EGGSHELL."
C'MON, DAD! WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE BEFORE THE WHOLE DA
BWAAROOM

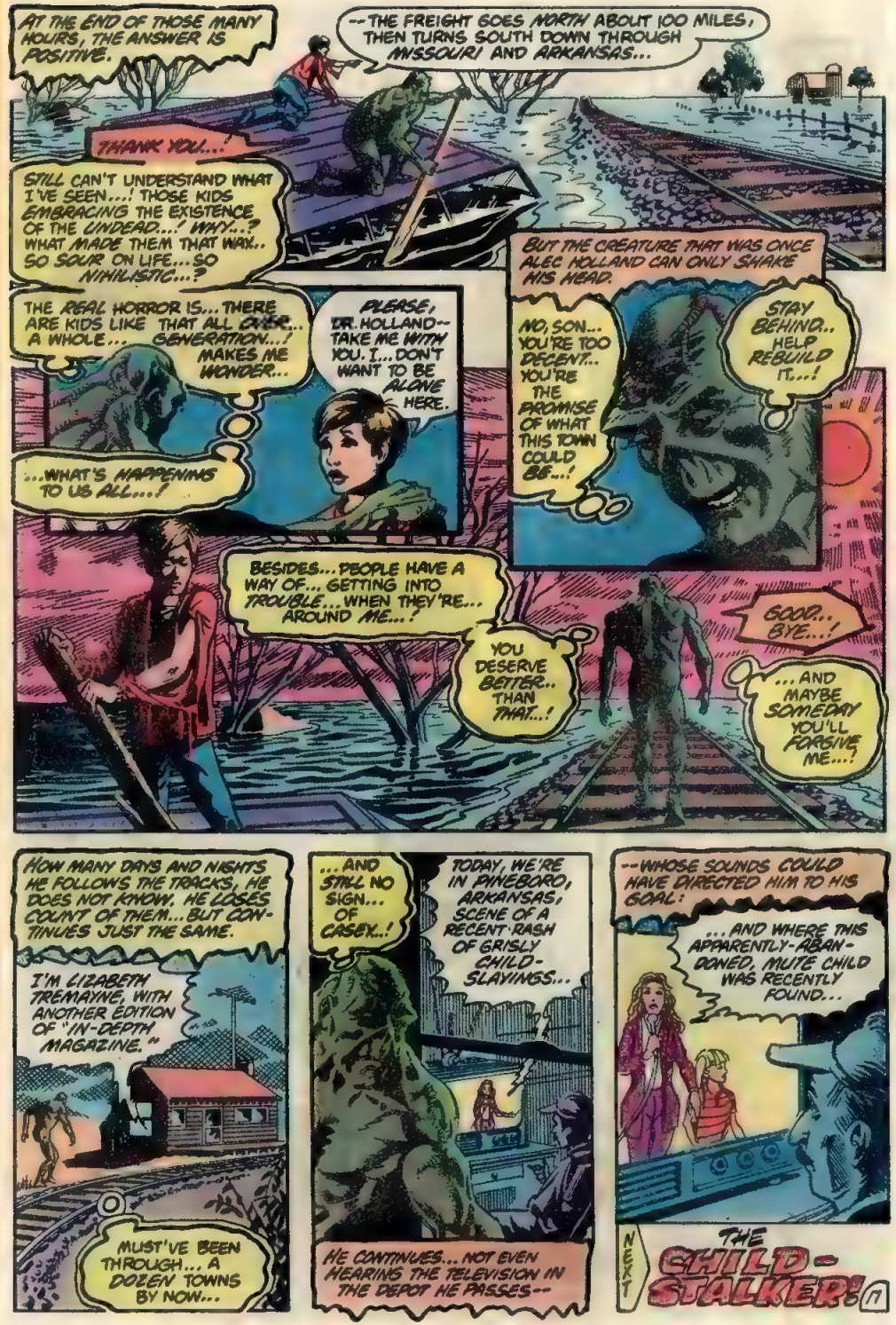

FOR THE MAN-BRUTE, THE DAY HAS BEEN NO LESS LONG.
BOOM
THAT'S... THE SECOND BLAST...! DAMN...! THAT GUY MAKES ME... SICK...!
FRONT STREET ARCADE
SISTER AND NEPHEW... COULD BE DEAD..!
...AND HE'S OFF DOING LORD-KNOWS-WHAT... INSTEAD OF LOOKING FOR THEM...!
SO I'VE... GOT TO...! BUT I'VE BEEN... ALL OVER TOWN...!
THIS VIDEOGAME ARCADE...! LAST PLACE LEFT... TO LOOK IN...!
BUT I HAVEN'T MUCH TIME... SUN'S GOING DOWN--
MOTHER... OF MERCY..!
BOBBY... STRUNG UP LIKE A... A SLAB OF BEEF...!
DR. HOLLAND...! WE COULDN'T GET BACK... IN TIME...!
THEY CAUGHT US... TRIED TO DRINK MY BLOOD...
PURPLE HEADED WARRIOR
STAR FIRE
HE'S STILL ALIVE...! THANK HEAVEN...!
...BUT SUN... STARTED COMIN' UP. THEY COULDN'T...!
SO THEY HUNG ME HERE... TO HAVE ME... FOR "BREAKFAST"... LATER--!
GOTTA... GET OUTTA HERE...! UNCLE LARRY'S GONNA BLOW UP THE DAM--!
OH, MY SWEET LORD...!
POOR BOBBY...! DOESN'T KNOW... THE DAM'S ALREADY BEEN BLOWN...!
BUT WE'RE DOOMED... UNLESS WE CAN-- MUH...?
MAKES SENSE, THOUGH...! VAMPIRES CAN BE DESTROYED... BY RUNNING WATER... SO LARRY'S FLOODING THE TOWN...!
HOLLAND WORKS INTENTLY TO FREE THE BOY. SO INTENTLY, HE DOES NOT SEE FALSE BOTTOMS IN THE HOLLOWED-OUT GAME- AND PINBALL-MACHINES OPENING... NOR THEIR OCCUPANTS EMERGING.
HEY, LOOKIT-- IT'S THE PLANT-CREEP FROM THE TRAIN.
WELCOME TO THE SCENE, CREEP. DIDN'T PICK UP ON IT, THOUGH, DIDJA? THE GAMES AN' JUNK? THEY'RE LIKE... COFFINS, MAN!


I'M STIV... STIV SLASHERS. ME AN' MY FRIENDS HERE, WE'RE LIKE, UH, VAMPIRES, Y'KNOW? WE DID IT--THE WHOLE FREAKIN' TOWN.
WAY...? HOW...?
BECAUSE WE WERE BORED, CREEP! LIFE STINKS. BUT THIS... THIS IS A KICK.
I WAS FIGURIN' ON SPLITTIN', SEE--I'M DRIVIN' OUT. I'M SPEEDIN'. THEN I SEE THIS NASTY-LOOKIN' CHICK BY THE ROAD...
"I FIGURE SHE AIN'T GOIN' NOWHERE, SO SHE WANTS TO MESS AROUND OR SOME JUNK. THEN I SEE SHE'S GOT THESE FANGS. AN' THAT'S HOW IT STARTED--WITH ME.
"THE OTHERS?... WELL, Y'KNOW HOW SOMETIMES YOU JUS' WANNA GO OUT AN' HURT SOME CREEP? LIKE WHEN YER SLAMDANCIN' AN' YOU JUS' WANNA WAIL AWAY AN' DO SOMEBODY SOME SERIOUS DAMAGE?"
WELL, WHEN I GOT LIKE THAT, I STARTED DOIN' IT WITH MY TEETH.
AN' LIKE, THE BLOOD--IT TASTED GREAT, AN' I NEEDED IT. ANYWAY, THIS OTHER CHICK I KNOW--
--X-HEAD--SHE'S GOT THIS STRAIGHT JOB IN A BLOOD BANK.
"SO X SWITCHED SOME OF MY BLOOD FOR THE NORMAL STUFF.
"SOON, THERE'S LOTS OF VAMPIRES.
"LOOK AT IT THIS WAY--THE TOWN WAS DYIN' ANYWAY..."
...SO WE DID IT A FAVOR. NOW, IT DON'T NEED NO FOOD, NO MONEY--NOTHIN'.
YA TURN TO BLOOD FOR YER SURVIVAL, AN' EVERYTHIN'S COOL!
EXCEPT... THERE'S NO LOGIC...TO THAT THINKING...!
FOR EXAMPLE... WHERE'S FRESH BLOOD GOING TO COME FROM...?
NO WONDER LARRY THOUGHT EXTREME MEASURES...NECESSARY...! TO PREVENT...A NATIONWIDE EPIDEMIC...OF VAMPIRISM...!
MOM?! NO! IT'S ME--BOBBY! DON'T YOU RECOG-NIZE ME--?
HILLARY!
THE KID'S YOURS!
DEAR LORD, SHE'S ONE OF THEM NOW...! BOBBY'S BEING ATTACKED...BY HIS OWN MOTHER...?!
"I CAN'T...LET THAT... HAPPEN...!"

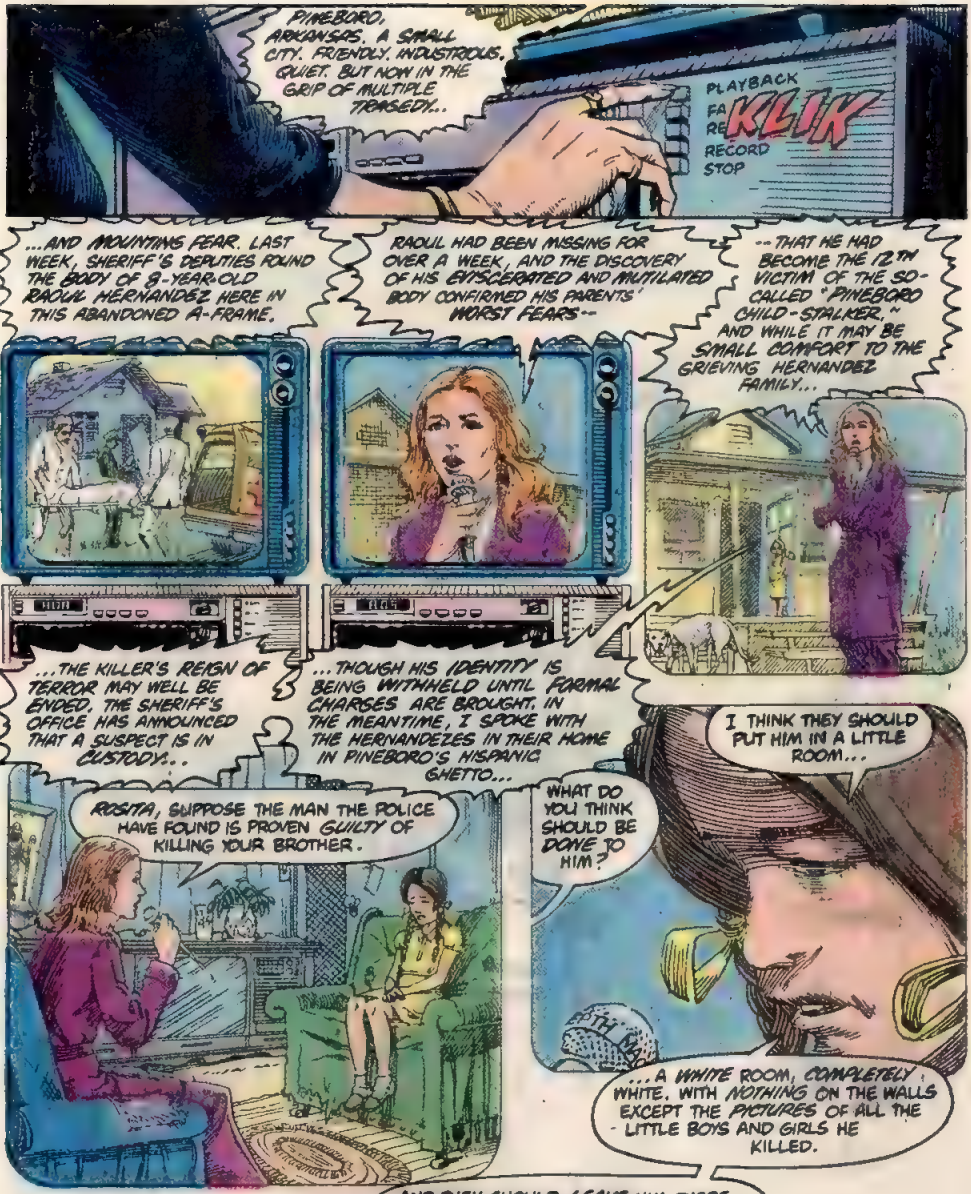

I WISH...TO HEAVEN... BOBBY DIDN'T HAVE TO... WATCH THIS...
...BUT I DON'T... HAVE ANY CHOICE...!
KRUAGH
MOM!
KCHOK
NO!
TAKE 'EM!
MOM... OH MOM...
AND WHILE ONE BOY WATCHES HIS MOTHER'S BODY DISSOLVE...
...ANOTHER WATCHES THE APPARENT DISSOLUTION OF HIS PARENT'S SANITY.
DAD--C'MON! WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME--!
STEVE, WHAT... WHAT ARE YOU SAYING? DON'T YOU KNOW? I THOUGHT YOU UNDERSTOOD--THERE ISN'T ANY ESCAPE!
EVEN IF WE GOT TO THE TRUCK, WE COULDN'T OUTRACE A FLOOD, FOR GOD'S SAKE! WE'RE AS GOOD AS DEAD ALREADY!
BUT IT COULDN'T BE HELPED--IT HAD TO BE DONE! YOU SEE THAT, DON'T YOU? THE VAMPIRES ARE RUNNING OUT OF BLOOD! SOON, THEY'D SPREAD TO OTHER TOWNS, AND--
SHUT UP! JUST SHUT UP! YOU HAD NO RIGHT TO DO THIS--NOT TO ME!
HOW COULD YOU EVEN THINK OF THIS? HOW? TO SACRIFICE MY LIFE--WITHOUT EVEN ASKING ME?!
"WHAT KIND OF MONSTER ARE YOU?" STEVE SCREAMS. "WHAT--" AND HIS FATHER BEGINS TO REPLY, OVER THE BOY'S TEARFUL OUTBURST: I COULDN'T DO IT ALONE--" BUT BOTH VOICES ARE DROWNED OUT--
--AS THEIR THROATS FILL WITH RUSHING WATER.
AND WHAT THE MAN AND HIS SON THINK OR FEEL ABOUT EACH OTHER AT THE LAST, NEITHER ONE WILL EVER KNOW.


OOOSSHH
THAT SOUND...! THE WATER... FROM THE DAM...!
THE TOWN'S... FLOODING...!
GOT TO FIND... HIGH GROUND... NOW...!
BRAKASH
HANG ON, BOBBY... WE'RE BLOWING THIS JOINT... THE FASTEST WAY... POSSIBLE...!
UP, BOBBY... UP...!
THAT'S IT... ONTO THE... ROOF...!
FORGET IT, MAN-- YA CAN'T!
TRYIN' TO ESCAPE, FREAKO?
BUT ALEC HOLLAND'S PURSUERS DO NOT REALIZE THAT IT IS NOT FROM THEM HE SEEKS TO ESCAPE.
AND THE THING HE FLEES IS FAR MORE THREATENING TO THEM THAN TO HIMSELF.
WATER?!
THIS, HOWEVER, THEY DO REALIZE...


...TOO LATE.
WAAAAAA
THE SWAMP THING AND BOBBY DOWNS HOLD THEIR BREATH AS, AROUND AND BELOW THEM, THE ENTIRE TOWN IS FLOODED.
...AND THE SHEER FORCE OF THE POUNDING WATER RIPS THE ROOF FROM THE ARCADE!
AND AS THEIR EARS ARE FLOODED WITH SCREAMS OF DEATH--OR, MORE ACCURATELY, OF DESTRUCTION--
--THEY ARE SWEPT AWAY...
...TO OBLIVION.
THEY REMAIN ATOP THE ROCKING, DRIFTING ROOF.
BUT THE QUESTION OF THEIR SURVIVAL WILL NOT BE ANSWERED FOR MANY HOURS.


AT THE END OF THOSE MANY HOURS, THE ANSWER IS POSITIVE.
--THE FREIGHT GOES NORTH ABOUT 100 MILES, THEN TURNS SOUTH DOWN THROUGH MISSOURI AND ARKANSAS...
THANK YOU...!
STILL CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT I'VE SEEN...! THOSE KIDS EMBRACING THE EXISTENCE OF THE UNDEAD...! WHY..? WHAT MADE THEM THAT WAY.. SO SOUR ON LIFE...SO NIHILISTIC...?
THE REAL HORROR IS... THERE ARE KIDS LIKE THAT ALL OVER... A WHOLE... GENERATION...! MAKES ME WONDER...
PLEASE, DR. HOLLAND-- TAKE ME WITH YOU. I... DON'T WANT TO BE ALONE HERE.
...WHAT'S HAPPENING TO US ALL...!
BUT THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE ALEC HOLLAND CAN ONLY SHAKE HIS HEAD.
NO, SON... YOU'RE TOO DECENT... YOU'RE THE PROMISE OF WHAT THIS TOWN COULD BE...!
STAY BEHIND.. HELP REBUILD IT...!
BESIDES... PEOPLE HAVE A WAY OF... GETTING INTO TROUBLE... WHEN THEY'RE... AROUND ME...!
YOU DESERVE BETTER.. THAN THAT...!
GOOD.. BYE...!
...AND MAYBE SOMEDAY YOU'LL FORGIVE ME...!
HOW MANY DAYS AND NIGHTS HE FOLLOWS THE TRACKS, HE DOES NOT KNOW. HE LOSES COUNT OF THEM... BUT CONTINUES JUST THE SAME.
I'M LIZABETH TREMAYNE, WITH ANOTHER EDITION OF "IN-DEPTH MAGAZINE."
MUST'VE BEEN THROUGH... A DOZEN TOWNS BY NOW...
...AND STILL NO SIGN... OF CASEY..!
TODAY, WE'RE IN PINEBORO, ARKANSAS, SCENE OF A RECENT RASH OF GRISLY CHILD-SLAYINGS...
HE CONTINUES... NOT EVEN HEARING THE TELEVISION IN THE DEPOT HE PASSES--
--WHOSE SOUNDS COULD HAVE DIRECTED HIM TO HIS GOAL:
...AND WHERE THIS APPARENTLY-ABANDONED, MUTE CHILD WAS RECENTLY FOUND...
NEXT
THE CHILD-STALKER!
11

60¢
U.K. 20p
NO. 4
AUG.
The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
WHERE THE ACTION IS!
T. YEATES


PINEBORO, ARKANSAS. A SMALL CITY. FRIENDLY. INDUSTRIOUS. QUIET. BUT NOW IN THE GRIP OF MULTIPLE TRAGEDY...
PLAYBACK
FA
RE
KLIK
RECORD
STOP
...AND MOUNTING FEAR. LAST WEEK, SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES FOUND THE BODY OF 8-YEAR-OLD RAOUL HERNANDEZ HERE IN THIS ABANDONED A-FRAME.
RAOUL HAD BEEN MISSING FOR OVER A WEEK, AND THE DISCOVERY OF HIS EVISCERATED AND MUTILATED BODY CONFIRMED HIS PARENTS' WORST FEARS--
--THAT HE HAD BECOME THE 12TH VICTIM OF THE SO-CALLED "PINEBORO CHILD-STALKER." AND WHILE IT MAY BE SMALL COMFORT TO THE GRIEVING HERNANDEZ FAMILY...
...THE KILLER'S REIGN OF TERROR MAY WELL BE ENDED. THE SHERIFF'S OFFICE HAS ANNOUNCED THAT A SUSPECT IS IN CUSTODY...
...THOUGH HIS IDENTITY IS BEING WITHHELD UNTIL FORMAL CHARGES ARE BROUGHT. IN THE MEANTIME, I SPOKE WITH THE HERNANDEZES IN THEIR HOME IN PINEBORO'S HISPANIC GHETTO...
ROSITA, SUPPOSE THE MAN THE POLICE HAVE FOUND IS PROVEN GUILTY OF KILLING YOUR BROTHER.
WHAT DO YOU THINK SHOULD BE DONE TO HIM?
I THINK THEY SHOULD PUT HIM IN A LITTLE ROOM...
...A WHITE ROOM, COMPLETELY WHITE, WITH NOTHING ON THE WALLS EXCEPT THE PICTURES OF ALL THE LITTLE BOYS AND GIRLS HE KILLED.
AND THEY SHOULD LEAVE HIM THERE-- SO HE HAS TO LOOK AT THOSE PICTURES FOR THE REST OF HIS LIFE.
J-8215

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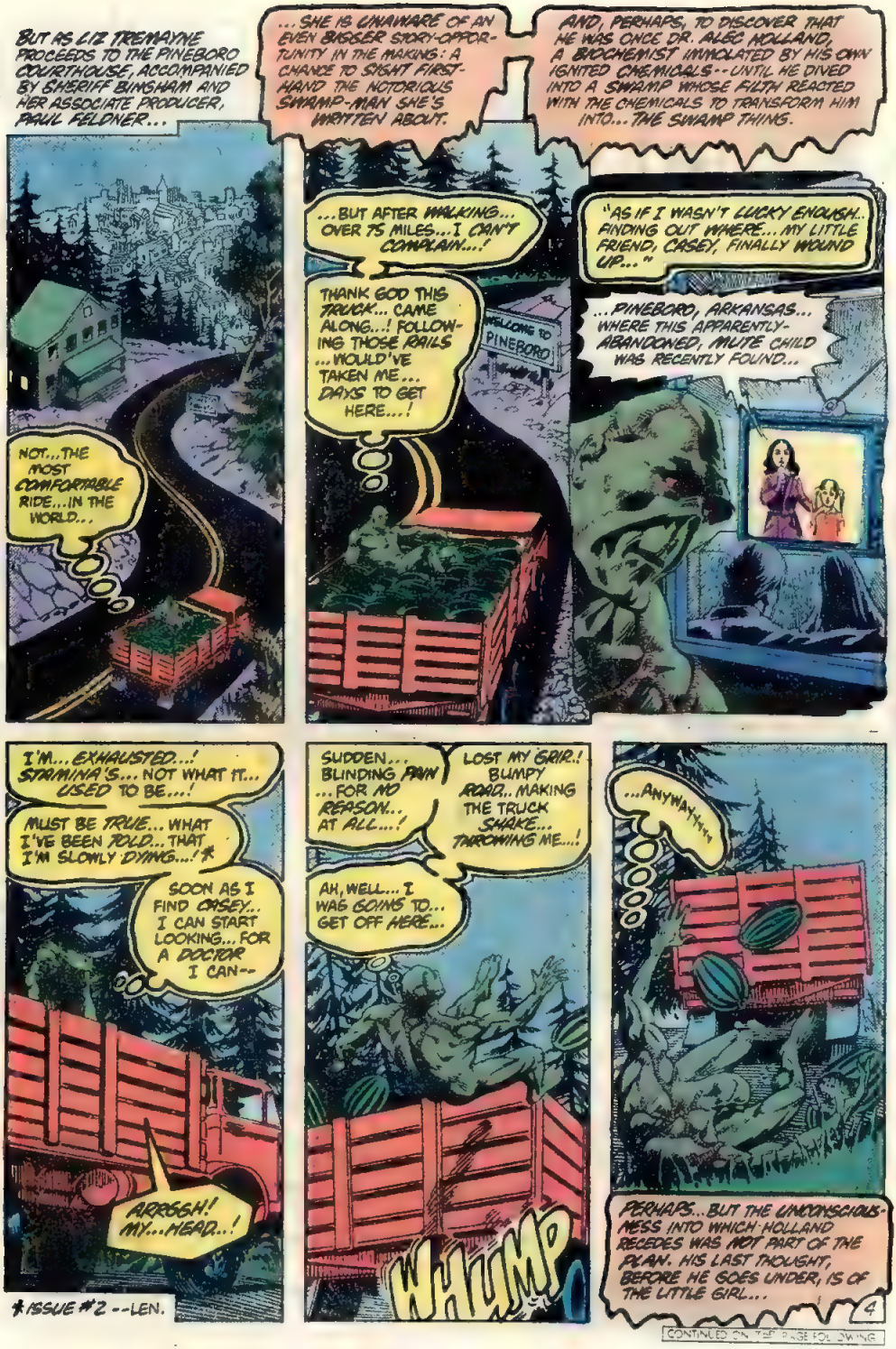
IN THE WHITE ROOM

a MARTIN PASKO (writer) . TOM YEATES (artist) . LEN WEIN (editor) . presentation / TATJANA WOOD (colorist) & assisted by: JOHN COSTANZA (letterer)

THIS IS LIZABETH TREMAYNE, SIGNING OFF FOR ANOTHER EDITION OF "IN-DEPTH MAGAZINE."
KLIK
AND WHEN THIS TAPE GOES OUT BY SATELLITE TOMORROW TO OVER 350 MARKETS COAST-TO-COAST...
...WE'LL HAVE BEATEN ALL THE NETWORKS TO NATIONAL COVERAGE OF THIS STORY!
AND WHY SHOULDN'T AH? WE ARE HAVIN' OURSELVES A VERA TENSE TIME HEAH--
WHAT'S THE MATTER, SHERIFF? YOU LOOK UNHAPPY.
--HIGHLY EMOTIONAL...
...AN' EVA SINCE YUH DID A SEGMENT ON YUH PROGRAM YESTUHDAY--'BOUT THAT LI'L MUTE GAL THEY FOUND OVER TO THE TRAIN-STATION*...
--THE NATIONAL PRESS IS FIXIN' TO FLOCK HEAH. THE BERSAVES AIN'T GONNA LIKE SEEIN' PINEBORO BECOME A CIRCUS.
WPIN-TV
I'M SORRY, BINGHAM--BUT I GUESS THAT'S ONE OF THE PRICES WE PAY FOR THE FIRST AMENDMENT.
BUT FOR SOME-ONE WHO DOESN'T LIKE REPORTERS...
...YOU'RE NOT ABOVE STEALING IDEAS FROM THEM, ARE YOU?
IF YUH MEAN THAT WHITE HOODIN'-CELL FUH THE SUSPECT, THAT WAS THE HERNANDEZ GIRL'S INSPIRATION, NOT YOURS...
SURE, IF YOU DON'T MIND ROUGHING UP A GUY'S CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS A BIT.
...AN' A GOOD ONE, TOO.
WE DO THANGS OUR OWN WAY DOWN HEAH, MISSY...
TILL NOW, WE'D BEEN FOLLERIN' A FAIRLY SUCCESSFUL POLICY O' CONTAINMENT ON THIS THANG--
*LAST ISSUE--LEN
...AN' THAT INCLUDES USIN' ANY MEANS AT OUR DISPOSAL TUH OBTAIN A CONFESSION.
AH'LL MAKE A DEAL WITH YUH--AN' WON'T CALL THE A.C.L.U. IF YOU DON'T.
NOW, YOU FOLKS WANNA COVER THE ARRAIGNMENT OR NOT?
OH, PAUL--WHEN YOU GET A CHANCE, GET RID OF THIS POSTER, WILL YOU?
I NEVER COULD STAND "UNCLE BARNEY," FRANKLY, I'M GLAD THE WIMP WENT INTO THE DUMPER.
I DON'T MIND HAVING TO USE HIS OLD OFFICES WHILE WE'RE HERE, BUT ONLY IF I DON'T HAVE TO LOOK AT THAT SIMPERING PUSS OF HIS...
UNCLE BARNEY'S GOOD NEIGHBOR HOUR WEEKDAYS AT 5:30-WPIN-TV


BUT AS LIZ TREMAYNE PROCEEDS TO THE PINEBORO COURTHOUSE, ACCOMPANIED BY SHERIFF BIMSHAM AND HER ASSOCIATE PRODUCER, PAUL FELDNER...
...SHE IS UNAWARE OF AN EVEN BIGGER STORY-OPPORTUNITY IN THE MAKING: A CHANCE TO SIGHT FIRST-HAND THE NOTORIOUS SWAMP-MAN SHE'S WRITTEN ABOUT.
AND, PERHAPS, TO DISCOVER THAT HE WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND, A BIOCHEMIST IMMOLATED BY HIS OWN IGNITED CHEMICALS--UNTIL HE DIVED INTO A SWAMP WHOSE FILTH REACTED WITH THE CHEMICALS TO TRANSFORM HIM INTO...THE SWAMP THING.
NOT...THE MOST COMFORTABLE RIDE...IN THE WORLD...
...BUT AFTER WALKING... OVER 75 MILES...I CAN'T COMPLAIN...!
THANK GOD THIS TRUCK... CAME ALONG...! FOLLOWING THOSE RAILS ...WOULD'VE TAKEN ME... DAYS TO GET HERE...!
WELCOME TO PINEBORO
"AS IF I WASN'T LUCKY ENOUGH.. FINDING OUT WHERE... MY LITTLE FRIEND, CASEY, FINALLY WOUND UP..."
...PINEBORO, ARKANSAS... WHERE THIS APPARENTLY-ABANDONED, MUTE CHILD WAS RECENTLY FOUND...
I'M... EXHAUSTED...! STAMINA'S... NOT WHAT IT... USED TO BE...!
MUST BE TRUE... WHAT I'VE BEEN TOLD.. THAT I'M SLOWLY DYING...! *
SOON AS I FIND CASEY.. I CAN START LOOKING... FOR A DOCTOR I CAN--
ARRGGH! MY...HEAD..!
SUDDEN... BLINDING PAIN ...FOR NO REASON.. AT ALL...!
LOST MY GRIP..! BUMPY ROAD.. MAKING THE TRUCK SHAKE... THROWING ME...!
AH, WELL... I WAS GOING TO... GET OFF HERE...
WHUMP
...ANYWAYYYY
PERHAPS...BUT THE UNCONSCIOUSNESS INTO WHICH HOLLAND RECEDES WAS NOT PART OF THE PLAN. HIS LAST THOUGHT, BEFORE HE GOES UNDER, IS OF THE LITTLE GIRL...
4

* ISSUE #2 --LEN.

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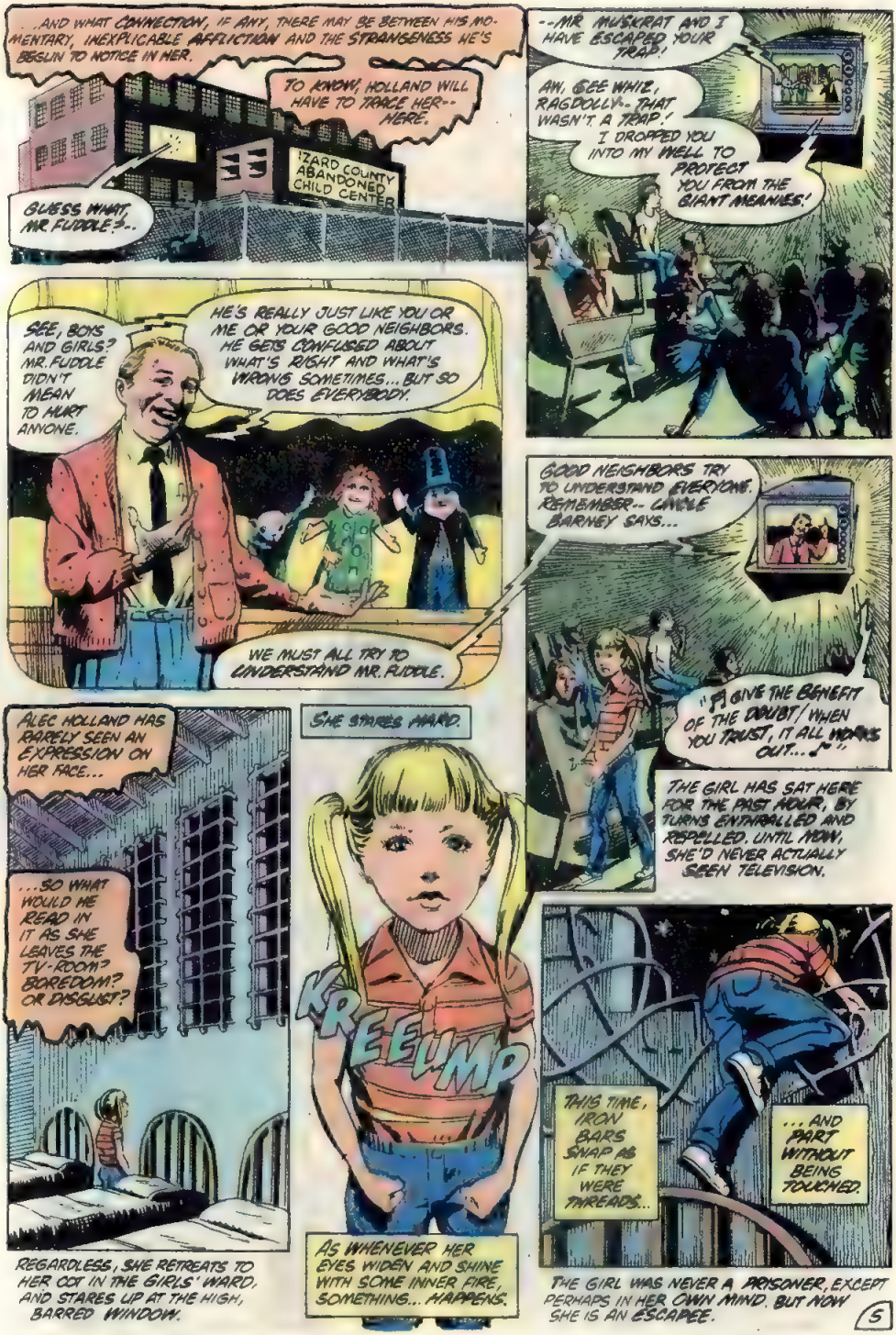
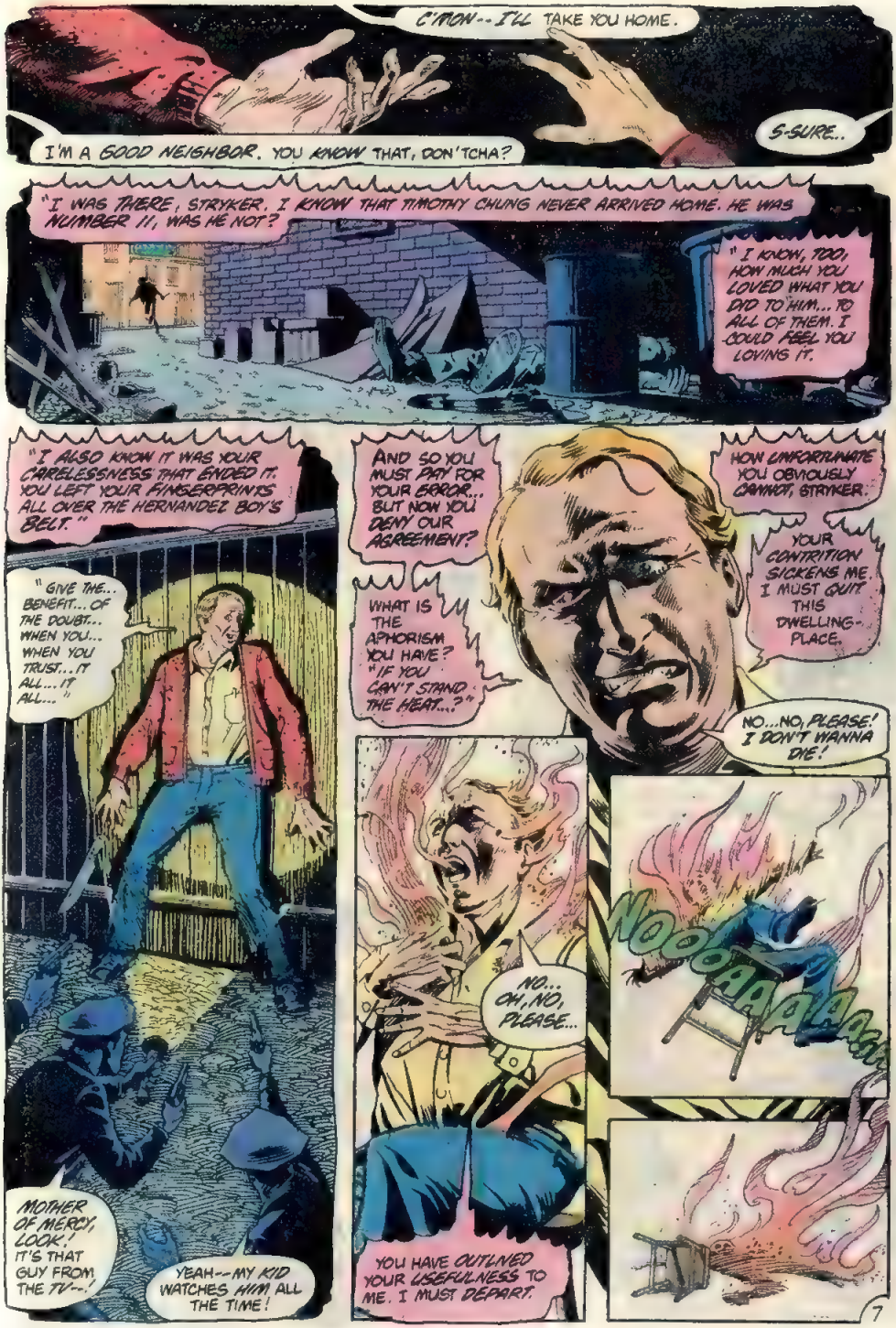
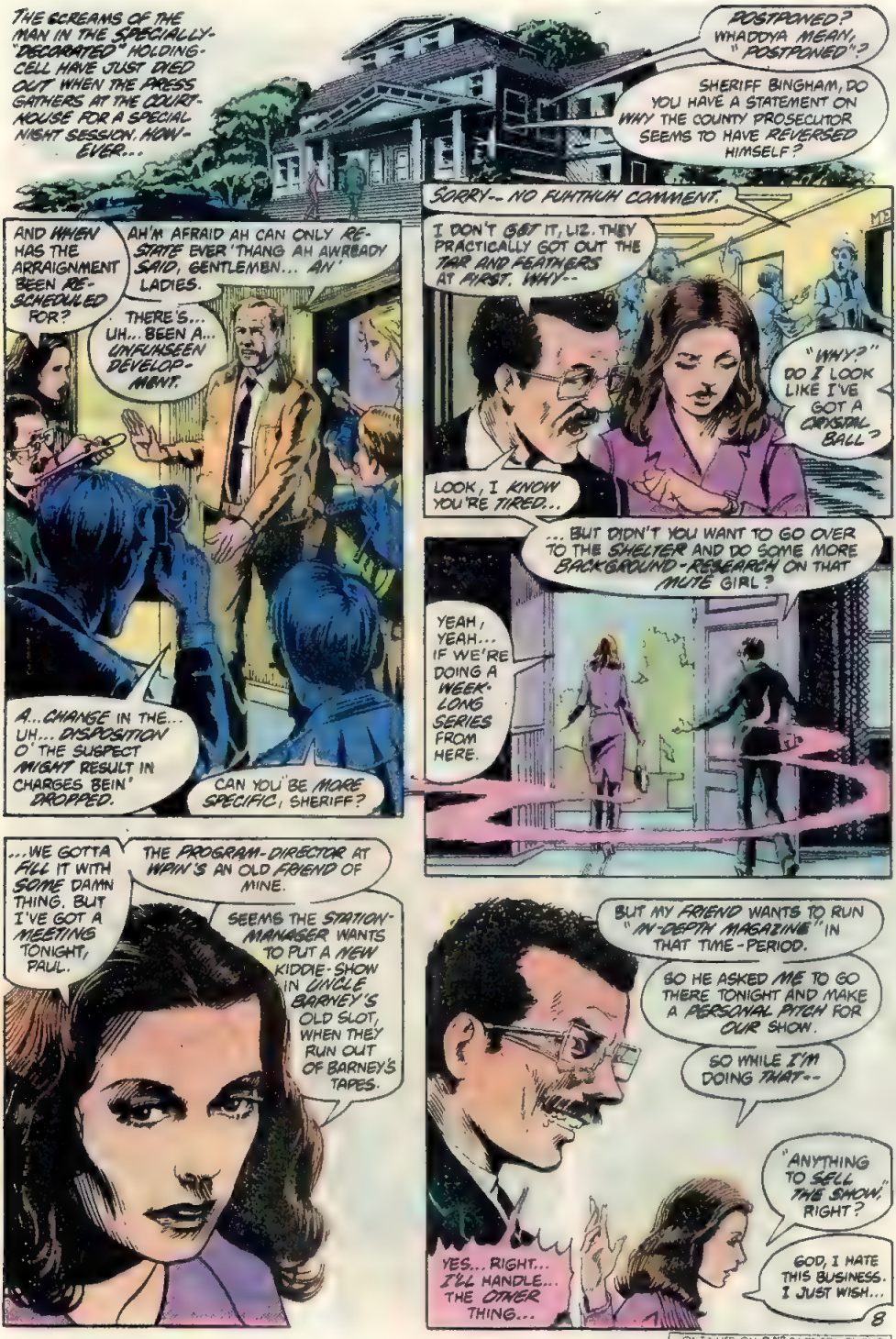

...AND WHAT CONNECTION, IF ANY, THERE MAY BE BETWEEN HIS MOMENTARY, INEXPLICABLE AFFLICTION AND THE STRANGENESS HE'S BEGUN TO NOTICE IN HER.
TO KNOW, HOLLAND WILL HAVE TO TRACE HER-- HERE.
'ZARD COUNTY ABANDONED CHILD CENTER
GUESS WHAT, MR. FUDDLE?--
--MR. MUSKRAT AND I HAVE ESCAPED YOUR TRAP!
AW, GEE WHIZ, RAGDOLLY-- THAT WASN'T A TRAP! I DROPPED YOU INTO MY WELL TO PROTECT YOU FROM THE GIANT MEANIES!
SEE, BOYS AND GIRLS? MR. FUDDLE DIDN'T MEAN TO HURT ANYONE.
HE'S REALLY JUST LIKE YOU OR ME OR YOUR GOOD NEIGHBORS. HE GETS CONFUSED ABOUT WHAT'S RIGHT AND WHAT'S WRONG SOMETIMES... BUT SO DOES EVERYBODY.
WE MUST ALL TRY TO UNDERSTAND MR. FUDDLE.
GOOD NEIGHBORS TRY TO UNDERSTAND EVERYONE. REMEMBER-- UNCLE BARNEY SAYS...
"I'LL GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT/ WHEN YOU TRUST, IT ALL WORKS OUT... ♪"
THE GIRL HAS SAT HERE FOR THE PAST HOUR, BY TURNS ENTHRALLED AND REPELLED. UNTIL NOW, SHE'D NEVER ACTUALLY SEEN TELEVISION.
ALEC HOLLAND HAS RARELY SEEN AN EXPRESSION ON HER FACE...
...SO WHAT WOULD HE READ IN IT AS SHE LEAVES THE TV-ROOM? BOREDOM? OR DISGUST?
REGARDLESS, SHE RETREATS TO HER COT IN THE GIRLS' WARD, AND STARES UP AT THE HIGH, BARRED WINDOW.
SHE STARES AHARD.
KREEUMP
AS WHENEVER HER EYES WIDEN AND SHINE WITH SOME INNER FIRE, SOMETHING... HAPPENS.
THIS TIME, IRON BARS SNAP AS IF THEY WERE THREADS...
...AND PART WITHOUT BEING TOUCHED.
THE GIRL WAS NEVER A PRISONER, EXCEPT PERHAPS IN HER OWN MIND. BUT NOW SHE IS AN ESCAPEE.

THERE IS ONLY ONE PRISONER IN PINEBORO. IN "THE WHITE ROOM".
WHAT I DID... HORRIBLE ...SO HORRIBLE!
BUT I DIDN'T MEAN TO... GOT CONFUSED... GOT CONFUSED ...NOT A BAD PERSON...
LIES. LIES.' YOU CANNOT DISOWN WHAT YOU HAVE DONE. NOT NOW.
YOU DID IT BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO.
NO. YOU FORCED ME TO. BAD PERSON.'
YOU WANTED IT... BECAUSE YOU WANTED ME-- INSIDE YOU!
WRONG... WRONG. GOT CONFUSED!
"I'M A GOOD NEIGHBOR, HONEST I AM. GOT CONFUSED!"
BOYOBOY... HALF-PAST 12 AN' MOM PROB'LY THINKS "THE MAN" GOT ME!
TIMMY CHUNG, SHE'S GONNA HANG YER BUTT OUT TO DRY FOR THIS ONE!
"CONFUSED, STRIKER? HARDLY. I KNOW BETTER. I WAS THERE, TOO."
...RIGHT THERE, EVERY TIME, IN THE SHADOWS...
"...WITH YOU."
WHOA THERE, SHORT-STUFF. WHERE YOU GOIN' AT THIS HOUR?
YOUR POOR MOM'S PROBABLY WORRYING HERSELF SICK, BOY.
YOU OUGHTN'T BE OUT ALONE. TOO DANGER-OUS.
Y-YEAH... 'SPECIALLY WITH THAT CRAZY GUY RUNNIN' 'ROUND LOOSE.
I...I KNOW. THAT'S WHY I WAS RUNNIN'-- RUNNIN' HOME.
GOOD BOY.


C'MON--I'LL TAKE YOU HOME.
S-SURE..
I'M A GOOD NEIGHBOR. YOU KNOW THAT, DON'TCHA?
"I WAS THERE, STRYKER. I KNOW THAT TIMOTHY CHUNG NEVER ARRIVED HOME. HE WAS NUMBER 11, WAS HE NOT?
" I KNOW, TOO, HOW MUCH YOU LOVED WHAT YOU DID TO HIM... TO ALL OF THEM. I COULD FEEL YOU LOVING IT.
"I ALSO KNOW IT WAS YOUR CARELESSNESS THAT ENDED IT. YOU LEFT YOUR FINGERPRINTS ALL OVER THE HERNANDEZ BOY'S BELT."
" GIVE THE... BENEFIT... OF THE DOUBT... WHEN YOU... WHEN YOU TRUST... IT ALL... IT ALL... "
MOTHER OF MERCY, LOOK! IT'S THAT GUY FROM THE TV--!
YEAH--MY KID WATCHES HIM ALL THE TIME!
AND SO YOU MUST PAY FOR YOUR ERROR... BUT NOW YOU DENY OUR AGREEMENT?
WHAT IS THE APHORISM YOU HAVE? "IF YOU CAN'T STAND THE HEAT...?"
HOW UNFORTUNATE YOU OBVIOUSLY CANNOT, STRYKER.
YOUR CONTRITION SICKENS ME. I MUST QUIT THIS DWELLING-PLACE.
NO...NO, PLEASE! I DON'T WANNA DIE!
NO... OH, NO, PLEASE...
YOU HAVE OUTLIVED YOUR USEFULNESS TO ME. I MUST DEPART.
NOOOAAAAAA


THE SCREAMS OF THE MAN IN THE SPECIALLY-"DECORATED" HOLDING-CELL HAVE JUST DIED OUT WHEN THE PRESS GATHERS AT THE COURT-HOUSE FOR A SPECIAL NIGHT SESSION. HOW-EVER...
POSTPONED? WHADDYA MEAN, "POSTPONED"?
SHERIFF BINGHAM, DO YOU HAVE A STATEMENT ON WHY THE COUNTY PROSECUTOR SEEMS TO HAVE REVERSED HIMSELF?
SORRY-- NO FUHTHUH COMMENT.
AND WHEN HAS THE ARRAIGNMENT BEEN RE-SCHEDULED FOR?
AH'M AFRAID AH CAN ONLY RE-STATE EVER'THANG AH AWREADY SAID, GENTLEMEN... AN' LADIES.
THERE'S... UH... BEEN A... UNFUHSEEN DEVELOP-MENT.
A... CHANGE IN THE... UH... DISPOSITION O' THE SUSPECT MIGHT RESULT IN CHARGES BEIN' DROPPED.
CAN YOU BE MORE SPECIFIC, SHERIFF?
I DON'T GET IT, LIZ. THEY PRACTICALLY GOT OUT THE TAR AND FEATHERS AT FIRST. WHY--
"WHY?" DO I LOOK LIKE I'VE GOT A CRYSTAL BALL?
LOOK, I KNOW YOU'RE TIRED...
... BUT DIDN'T YOU WANT TO GO OVER TO THE SHELTER AND DO SOME MORE BACKGROUND-RESEARCH ON THAT MUTE GIRL?
YEAH, YEAH... IF WE'RE DOING A WEEK-LONG SERIES FROM HERE.
...WE GOTTA FILL IT WITH SOME DAMN THING. BUT I'VE GOT A MEETING TONIGHT, PAUL.
THE PROGRAM-DIRECTOR AT WAIN'S AN OLD FRIEND OF MINE.
SEEMS THE STATION-MANAGER WANTS TO PUT A NEW KIDDIE-SHOW IN UNCLE BARNEY'S OLD SLOT, WHEN THEY RUN OUT OF BARNEY'S TAPES.
BUT MY FRIEND WANTS TO RUN "IN-DEPTH MAGAZINE" IN THAT TIME-PERIOD.
SO HE ASKED ME TO GO THERE TONIGHT AND MAKE A PERSONAL PITCH FOR OUR SHOW.
SO WHILE I'M DOING THAT--
"ANYTHING TO SELL THE SHOW," RIGHT?
YES... RIGHT... I'LL HANDLE... THE OTHER THING...
GOD, I HATE THIS BUSINESS. I JUST WISH...
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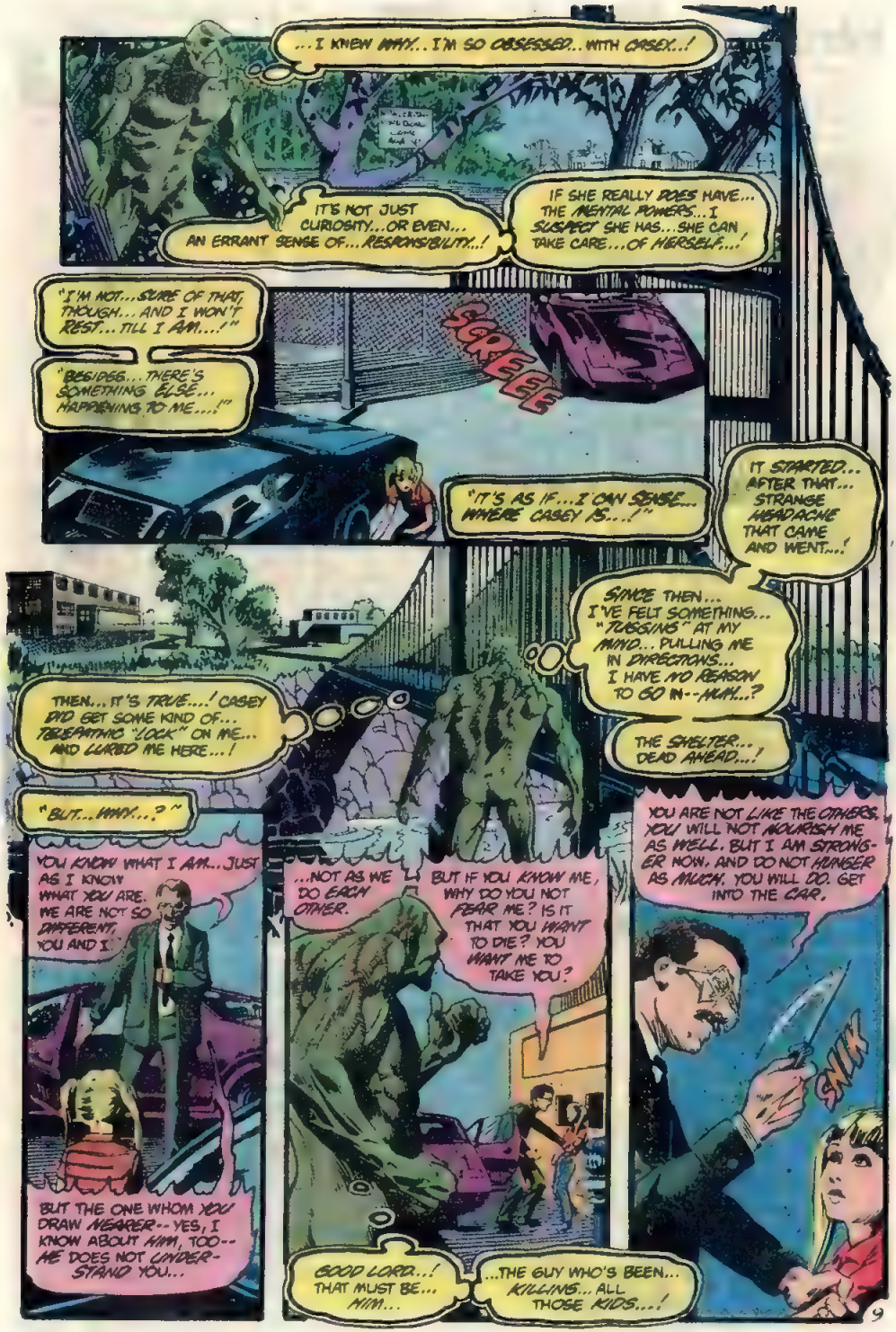
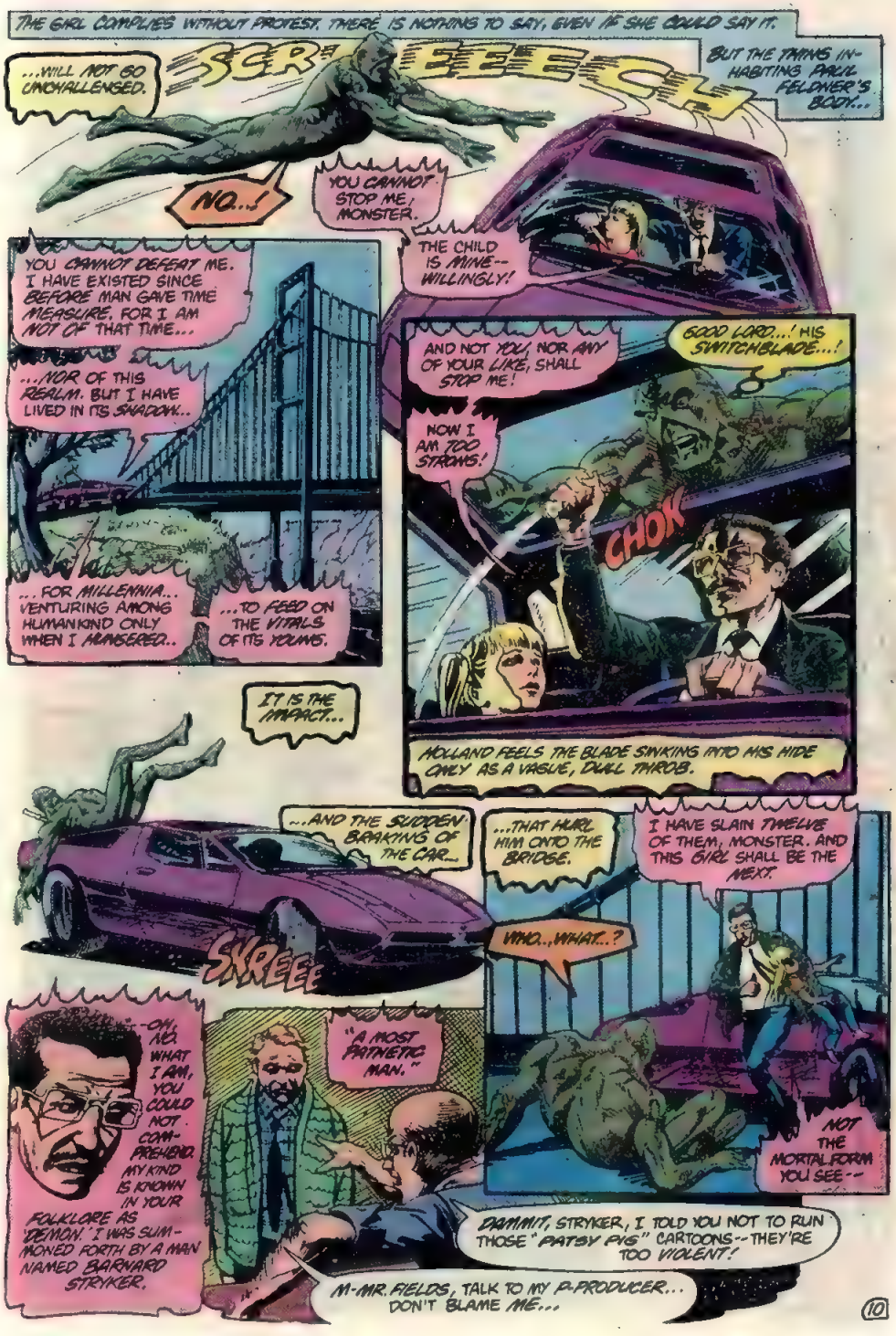
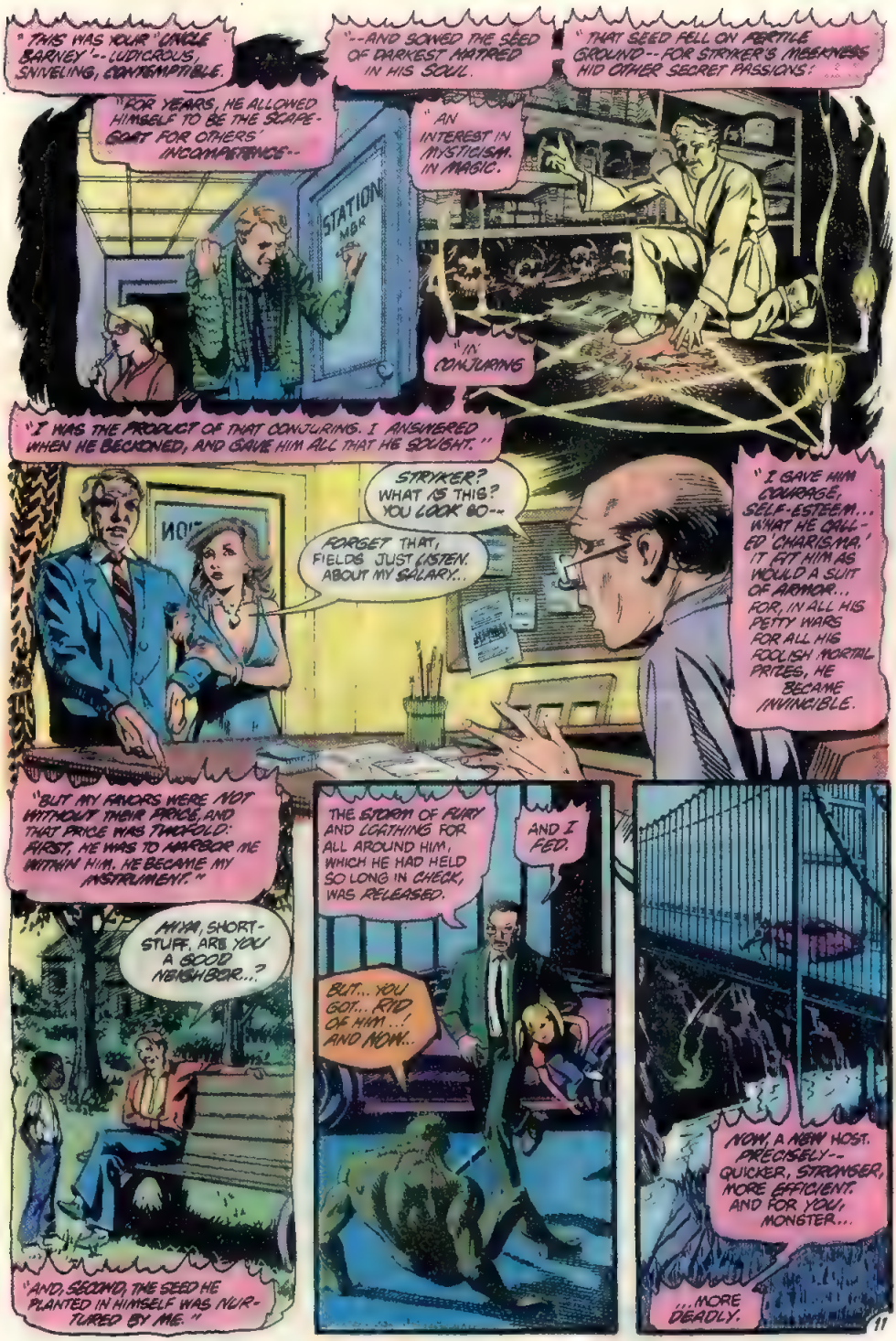
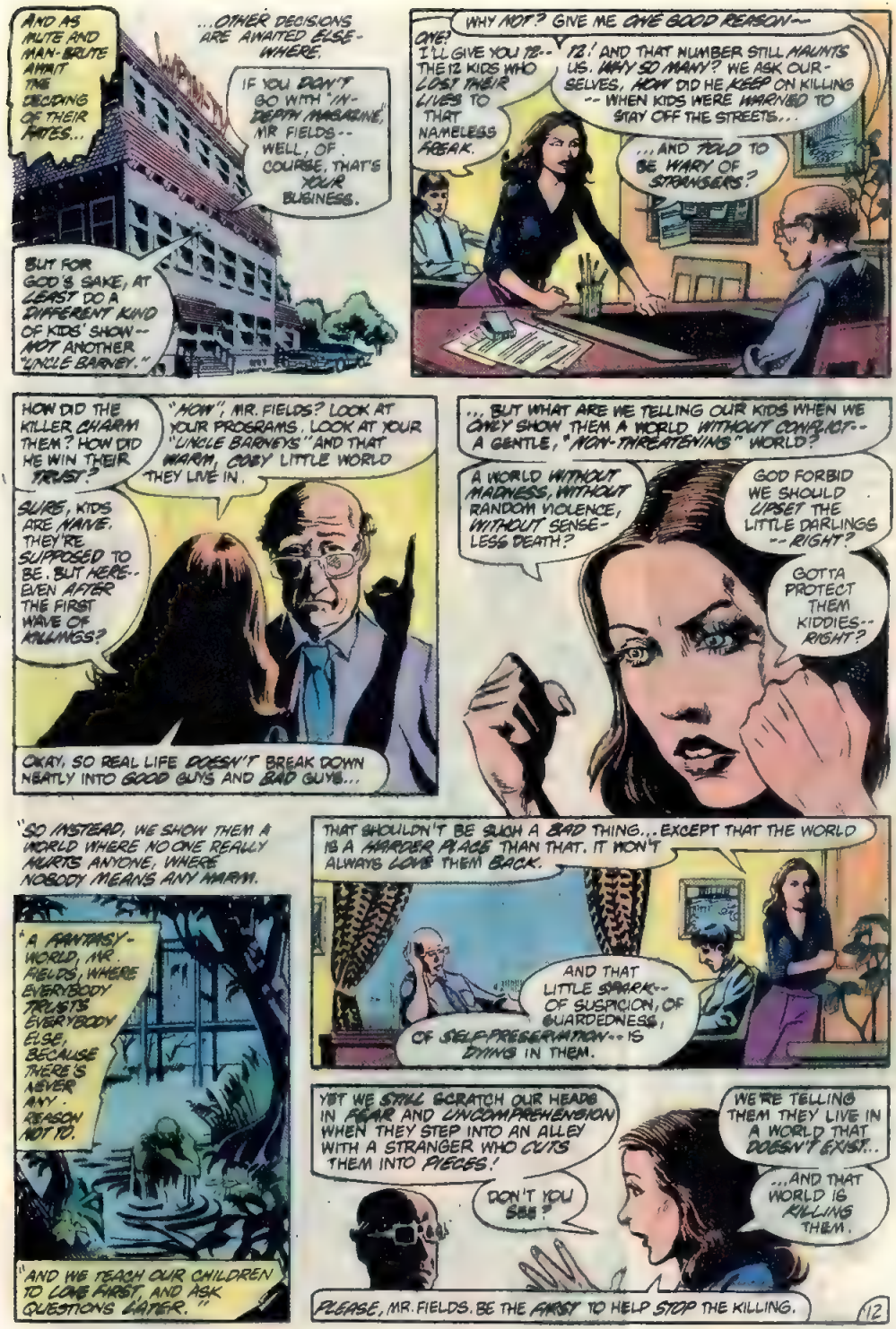
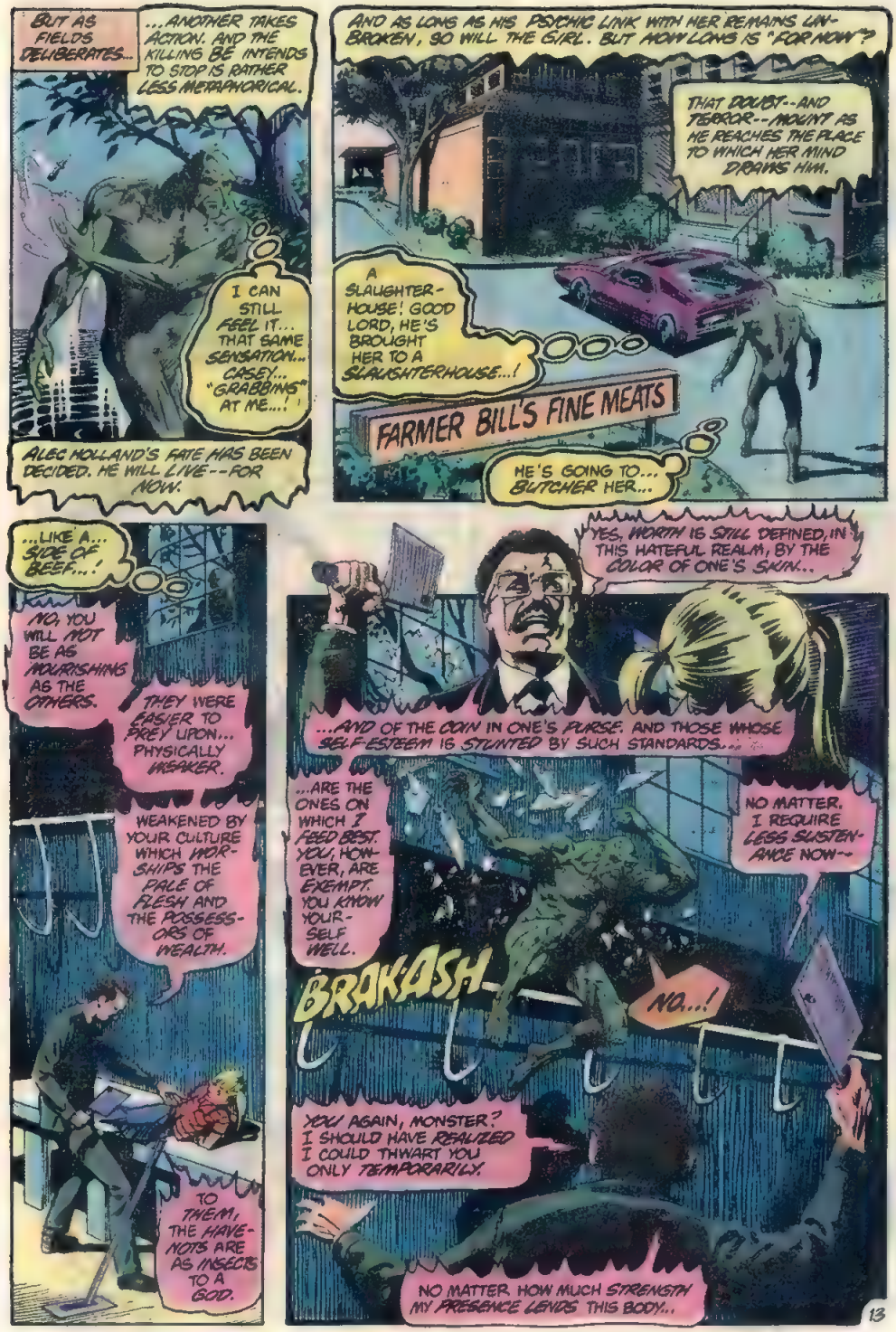

...I KNEW WHY... I'M SO OBSESSED... WITH CASEY...!
IT'S NOT JUST CURIOSITY...OR EVEN... AN ERRANT SENSE OF... RESPONSIBILITY...!
IF SHE REALLY DOES HAVE... THE MENTAL POWERS... I SUSPECT SHE HAS... SHE CAN TAKE CARE... OF HERSELF...!
"I'M NOT... SURE OF THAT, THOUGH... AND I WON'T REST... TILL I AM...!"
"BESIDES... THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE... HAPPENING TO ME...!"
SCREEE
"IT'S AS IF... I CAN SENSE... WHERE CASEY IS...!"
IT STARTED... AFTER THAT... STRANGE HEADACHE THAT CAME AND WENT...!
SINCE THEN... I'VE FELT SOMETHING... "TUGGING" AT MY MIND... PULLING ME IN DIRECTIONS... I HAVE NO REASON TO GO IN--HUH...?
THEN... IT'S TRUE...! CASEY DID GET SOME KIND OF... TELEPATHIC "LOCK" ON ME... AND LURED ME HERE...!
THE SHELTER... DEAD AHEAD...!
"BUT... WHY...?"
YOU KNOW WHAT I AM... JUST AS I KNOW WHAT YOU ARE. WE ARE NOT SO DIFFERENT, YOU AND I.
BUT THE ONE WHOM YOU DRAW NEARER-- YES, I KNOW ABOUT HIM, TOO-- HE DOES NOT UNDERSTAND YOU...
...NOT AS WE DO EACH OTHER.
BUT IF YOU KNOW ME, WHY DO YOU NOT FEAR ME? IS IT THAT YOU WANT TO DIE? YOU WANT ME TO TAKE YOU?
GOOD LORD...! THAT MUST BE... HIM...
...THE GUY WHO'S BEEN... KILLING... ALL THOSE KIDS...!
YOU ARE NOT LIKE THE OTHERS. YOU WILL NOT NOURISH ME AS WELL. BUT I AM STRONGER NOW, AND DO NOT HUNGER AS MUCH. YOU WILL DO. GET INTO THE CAR.
SNIK


THE GIRL COMPLIES WITHOUT PROTEST. THERE IS NOTHING TO SAY, EVEN IF SHE COULD SAY IT.
...WILL NOT GO UNCHALLENGED.
SCR-EEECH
BUT THE THING INHABITING PAUL FELDNER'S BODY...
NO...!
YOU CANNOT STOP ME, MONSTER.
THE CHILD IS MINE--WILLINGLY!
YOU CANNOT DEFEAT ME. I HAVE EXISTED SINCE BEFORE MAN GAVE TIME MEASURE. FOR I AM NOT OF THAT TIME...
...NOR OF THIS REALM. BUT I HAVE LIVED IN ITS SHADOW...
... FOR MILLENNIA... VENTURING AMONG HUMANKIND ONLY WHEN I HUNGERED...
...TO FEED ON THE VITALS OF ITS YOUNG.
AND NOT YOU, NOR ANY OF YOUR LIKE, SHALL STOP ME!
GOOD LORD...! HIS SWITCHBLADE...!
NOW I AM TOO STRONG!
CHOK
HOLLAND FEELS THE BLADE SINKING INTO HIS HIDE ONLY AS A VAGUE, DULL THROB.
IT IS THE IMPACT...
...AND THE SUDDEN BRAKING OF THE CAR...
SKREEE
...THAT HURL HIM ONTO THE BRIDGE.
I HAVE SLAIN TWELVE OF THEM, MONSTER. AND THIS GIRL SHALL BE THE NEXT.
WHO...WHAT...?
NOT THE MORTAL FORM YOU SEE--
-OH, NO. WHAT I AM, YOU COULD NOT COMPREHEND. MY KIND IS KNOWN IN YOUR FOLKLORE AS 'DEMON.' I WAS SUMMONED FORTH BY A MAN NAMED BARNARD STRYKER.
"A MOST PATHETIC MAN."
DAMMIT, STRYKER, I TOLD YOU NOT TO RUN THOSE "PATSY PIG" CARTOONS--THEY'RE TOO VIOLENT!
M-MR. FIELDS, TALK TO MY P-PRODUCER... DON'T BLAME ME...


"THIS WAS YOUR "UNCLE BARNEY"--LUDICROUS, SNIVELING, CONTEMPTIBLE.
"--AND SOWED THE SEED OF DARKEST HATRED IN HIS SOUL.
"THAT SEED FELL ON FERTILE GROUND--FOR STRYKER'S WEAKNESS HID OTHER SECRET PASSIONS.
"FOR YEARS, HE ALLOWED HIMSELF TO BE THE SCAPE-GOAT FOR OTHERS' INCOMPETENCE--
STATION MGR
"AN INTEREST IN MYSTICISM. IN MAGIC.
"IN CONJURING
"I WAS THE PRODUCT OF THAT CONJURING. I ANSWERED WHEN HE BECKONED, AND GAVE HIM ALL THAT HE SOUGHT."
STRYKER? WHAT IS THIS? YOU LOOK SO--
FORGET THAT, FIELDS JUST LISTEN. ABOUT MY SALARY...
"I GAVE HIM COURAGE, SELF-ESTEEM... WHAT HE CALLED 'CHARISMA.' IT FIT HIM AS WOULD A SUIT OF ARMOR... FOR, IN ALL HIS PETTY WARS FOR ALL HIS FOOLISH MORTAL PRIZES, HE BECAME INVINCIBLE.
"BUT MY FAVORS WERE NOT WITHOUT THEIR PRICE, AND THAT PRICE WAS TWOFOLD: FIRST, HE WAS TO HARBOR ME WITHIN HIM. HE BECAME MY INSTRUMENT."
AHYA, SHORT-STUFF. ARE YOU A GOOD NEIGHBOR...?
"AND, SECOND, THE SEED HE PLANTED IN HIMSELF WAS NURTURED BY ME."
THE STORM OF FURY AND LOATHING FOR ALL AROUND HIM, WHICH HE HAD HELD SO LONG IN CHECK, WAS RELEASED.
AND I FED.
BUT... YOU GOT... RID OF HIM..., AND NOW...
NOW, A NEW HOST. PRECISELY--QUICKER, STRONGER, MORE EFFICIENT. AND FOR YOU, MONSTER...
...MORE DEADLY.

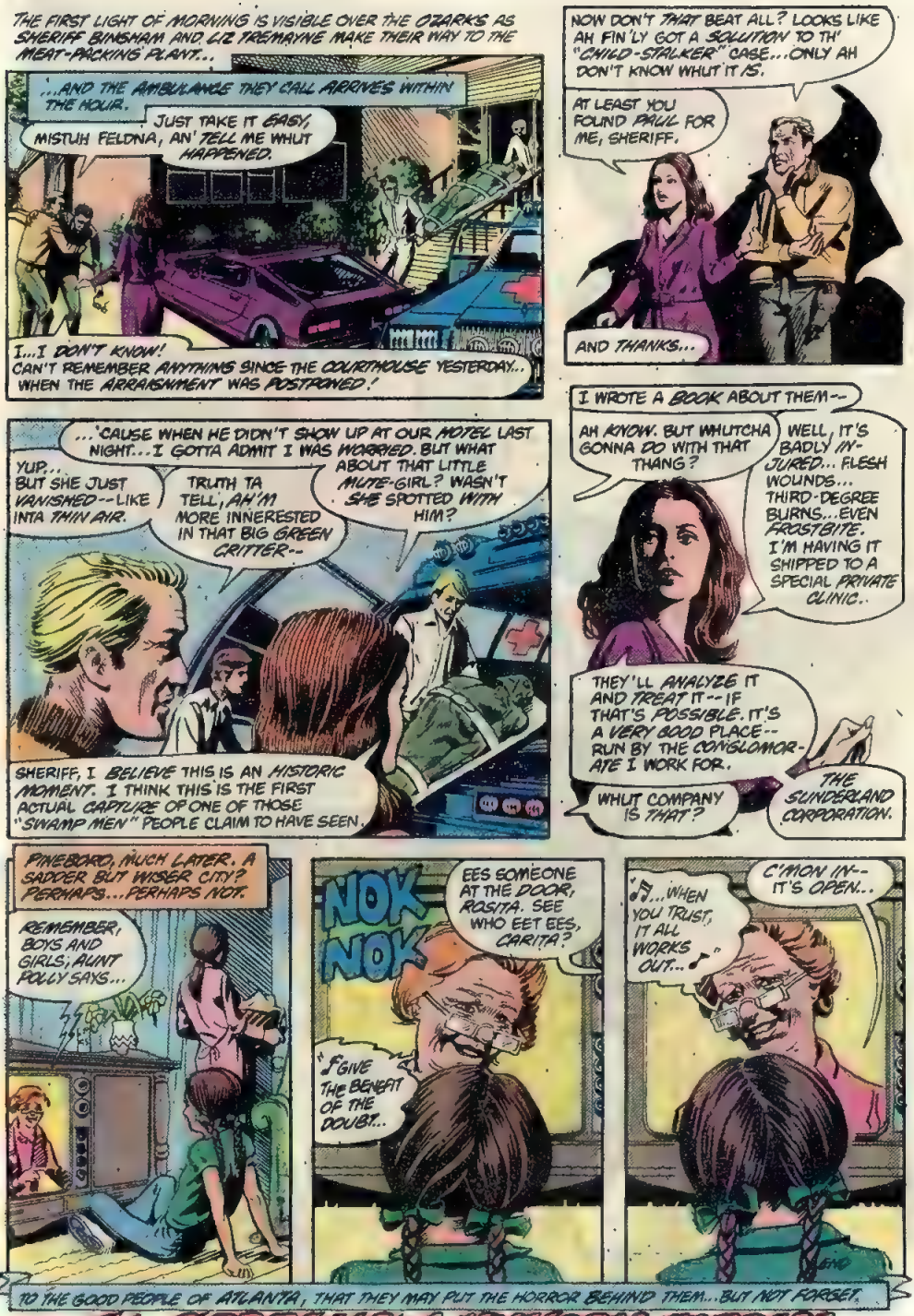

AND AS MUTE AND MAN-BRUTE AWAIT THE DECIDING OF THEIR FATES...
...OTHER DECISIONS ARE AWAITED ELSE-WHERE.
IF YOU DON'T GO WITH "IN-DEPTH MAGAZINE," MR FIELDS -- WELL, OF COURSE, THAT'S YOUR BUSINESS.
BUT FOR GOD'S SAKE, AT LEAST DO A DIFFERENT KIND OF KIDS' SHOW -- NOT ANOTHER "UNCLE BARNEY."
WHY NOT? GIVE ME ONE GOOD REASON--
ONE? I'LL GIVE YOU 12 -- THE 12 KIDS WHO LOST THEIR LIVES TO THAT NAMELESS FREAK.
12! AND THAT NUMBER STILL HAUNTS US. WHY SO MANY? WE ASK OUR-SELVES, HOW DID HE KEEP ON KILLING -- WHEN KIDS WERE WARNED TO STAY OFF THE STREETS...
...AND TOLD TO BE WARY OF STRANGERS?
HOW DID THE KILLER CHARM THEM? HOW DID HE WIN THEIR TRUST?
"HOW", MR. FIELDS? LOOK AT YOUR PROGRAMS. LOOK AT YOUR "UNCLE BARNEYS" AND THAT WARM, COSY LITTLE WORLD THEY LIVE IN.
SURE, KIDS ARE NAIVE. THEY'RE SUPPOSED TO BE. BUT HERE -- EVEN AFTER THE FIRST WAVE OF KILLINGS?
OKAY, SO REAL LIFE DOESN'T BREAK DOWN NEATLY INTO GOOD GUYS AND BAD GUYS...
...BUT WHAT ARE WE TELLING OUR KIDS WHEN WE ONLY SHOW THEM A WORLD WITHOUT CONFLICT -- A GENTLE, "NON-THREATENING" WORLD?
A WORLD WITHOUT MADNESS, WITHOUT RANDOM VIOLENCE, WITHOUT SENSE-LESS DEATH?
GOD FORBID WE SHOULD UPSET THE LITTLE DARLINGS -- RIGHT?
GOTTA PROTECT THEM KIDDIES -- RIGHT?
"SO INSTEAD, WE SHOW THEM A WORLD WHERE NO ONE REALLY HURTS ANYONE, WHERE NOBODY MEANS ANY HARM.
"A FANTASY-WORLD, MR. FIELDS, WHERE EVERYBODY TRUSTS EVERYBODY ELSE, BECAUSE THERE'S NEVER ANY REASON NOT TO.
"AND WE TEACH OUR CHILDREN TO LOVE FIRST, AND ASK QUESTIONS LATER."
THAT SHOULDN'T BE SUCH A BAD THING... EXCEPT THAT THE WORLD IS A HARDER PLACE THAN THAT. IT WON'T ALWAYS LOVE THEM BACK.
AND THAT LITTLE SPARK -- OF SUSPICION, OF GUARDEDNESS, OF SELF-PRESERVATION -- IS DYING IN THEM.
YET WE STILL SCRATCH OUR HEADS IN FEAR AND UNCOMPREHENSION WHEN THEY STEP INTO AN ALLEY WITH A STRANGER WHO CUTS THEM INTO PIECES!
DON'T YOU SEE?
WE'RE TELLING THEM THEY LIVE IN A WORLD THAT DOESN'T EXIST...
...AND THAT WORLD IS KILLING THEM.
PLEASE, MR. FIELDS. BE THE FIRST TO HELP STOP THE KILLING.


BUT AS FIELDS DELIBERATES...
...ANOTHER TAKES ACTION. AND THE KILLING BE INTENDS TO STOP IS RATHER LESS METAPHORICAL.
I CAN STILL FEEL IT... THAT SAME SENSATION... CASEY... "GRABBING" AT ME...!
ALEC HOLLAND'S FATE HAS BEEN DECIDED. HE WILL LIVE--FOR NOW.
AND AS LONG AS HIS PSYCHIC LINK WITH HER REMAINS UNBROKEN, SO WILL THE GIRL. BUT HOW LONG IS "FOR NOW"?
THAT DOUBT--AND TERROR--MOUNT AS HE REACHES THE PLACE TO WHICH HER MIND DRAWS HIM.
A SLAUGHTERHOUSE! GOOD LORD, HE'S BROUGHT HER TO A SLAUGHTERHOUSE...!
FARMER BILL'S FINE MEATS
HE'S GOING TO... BUTCHER HER...
...LIKE A... SIDE OF BEEF...!
NO, YOU WILL NOT BE AS NOURISHING AS THE OTHERS.
THEY WERE EASIER TO PREY UPON... PHYSICALLY WEAKER.
WEAKENED BY YOUR CULTURE WHICH WORSHIPS THE PALE OF FLESH AND THE POSSESSORS OF WEALTH.
TO THEM, THE HAVE-NOTS ARE AS INSECTS TO A GOD.
YES, WORTH IS STILL DEFINED, IN THIS HATEFUL REALM, BY THE COLOR OF ONE'S SKIN...
...AND OF THE COIN IN ONE'S PURSE. AND THOSE WHOSE SELF-ESTEEM IS STUNTED BY SUCH STANDARDS...
...ARE THE ONES ON WHICH I FEED BEST. YOU, HOWEVER, ARE EXEMPT. YOU KNOW YOURSELF WELL.
NO MATTER. I REQUIRE LESS SUSTENANCE NOW--
BRAKASH
NO...!
YOU AGAIN, MONSTER? I SHOULD HAVE REALIZED I COULD THWART YOU ONLY TEMPORARILY.
NO MATTER. HOW MUCH STRENGTH MY PRESENCE LENDS THIS BODY...

...THE ONE CALLED PAUL FELDNER COULD NEVER MAKE ME POWERFUL
SHRIEK!
SLISH
NOT TO VANQUISH YOU PERMANENTLY!
THAT... MEAT-CLEAVER...
ALMOST... CUT ME... IN HALF...!
BUT THAT SHALL NOT BE NECESSARY.
I AM SUFFICIENTLY STRONG TO DETER YOU FOR AS LONG AS I REQUIRE.
NO... NOT HER...
NOT... CASEY...!
SEE?
I DON'T... BELIEVE IT...! HE'S HOISTING ME UP... EFFORTLESSLY... AS IF I WEIGHED NO MORE... THAN AN ORANGE...!
INDEED. THE TRANSFORMED PAUL FELDNER LIFTS...
...THEN HANGS THE SWAMP-THING-- ON A MEAT HOOK!
THAT HOOK ...I BARELY FELT IT... BUT HIS TOUCH... SO HOT...!
NOW TELL ME, MONSTER: WHY NOT HER...HMM?
WHY NOT?
WHAT WOULD YOU GIVE FOR THE LIFE OF THIS CHILD, MONSTER?
WHAT WOULD YOU OFFER ME TO SPARE HER?
SPEAK-- OR HER BLOOD WILL FLOW LIKE SACRIFICIAL WINE.

"OFFER" HIM...? NOTHING... EXCEPT MYSEL--
WAIT... HIS BURNING TOUCH...
IT MUST MEAN... HIS "NATIVE CLIMATE"... IS LIKE FIRE... AND... AND...
YES... IT'S POSSIBLE...!
ME...! TAKE... ME...!
YOU, MONSTER? WHAT WOULD IT PROFIT ME EVEN IN THE ATTEMPT?
YOU ARE NOT EVEN ANIMAL. YOU ARE MORE VEGETATION THAN HUMAN: YOU ARE LESS TO ME THAN CURRION-- A PORTION FOR FOXES.
NO... NOT TO... FEED ON...!
...BUT TAKE ME... AS HOST...! BIGGEST.. STRONGEST HOST OF ALL..!
I... ACCEPT!
YES... YES. THE POWER IN THOSE LIMBS.. THE SAVAGERY OF THOSE JAWS!
I CAN ENVISION MANY.. POSSIBILITIES.
YOUR PROPOSITION IS MOST ATTRACTIVE, MONSTER.
DEAR LORD... HELP ME...!
LET MY TIMING... BE RIGHT...!
LET THIS... WORK...!

HIS PRAYER IS ANSWERED THE WAY ALL PRAYERS ARE, IF THEY ARE TO BE ANSWERED AT ALL:
SWIFTLY, DECISIVELY, IRREVOCABLY.
BEFORE THE OTHER-DIMENSIONAL THING CAN FULLY ENTER HOLLAND, HE SWINGS ABRUPTLY FORWARD ON THE HOOK...
...AND KICKS FELDNER, WHO IS DAZED AND DISORIENTED... BUT NO LONGER POSSESSED.
KLIK WHRRRRRA
THE MAN FALLS AGAINST A LEVER. A RELAY IS ACTIVATED.
IT IS DONE. THE MONSTER IS MINE NOW.
BUT A MOTOR STARTS SOMEWHERE. THERE IS THE GROAN OF GEARS PUSHED INTO RELUCTANT ACTION.
AND AS HUSH, STAINLESS STEEL DOORS OPEN LIKE A HUNGRY MAW, AND A GUST OF ARCTIC AIR WAFTS FROM WITHIN A MASSIVE MEAT-LOCKER, THE ALIEN INSIDE ALEC HOLLAND'S MISSHAPEN BODY KNOWS ITS FIRST TASTE OF FEAR.
NO...
NO!...
NOT.. THE COLD...!
NO!
NO!
BUT ITS EFFORTS ARE TOO LITTLE...
NOOOO
...TOO LATE.
SLAM
DESPERATELY, THE ENTITY ATTEMPTS TO BURN ITS WAY OUT OF THE DANGLING, MOSSY HULK.
IT IS DESTROYED.


THE FIRST LIGHT OF MORNING IS VISIBLE OVER THE OZARKS AS SHERIFF BINSHAM AND LIZ TREMAYNE MAKE THEIR WAY TO THE MEAT-PACKING PLANT...
...AND THE AMBULANCE THEY CALL ARRIVES WITHIN THE HOUR.
JUST TAKE IT EASY, MISTUH FELDNA, AN' TELL ME WHUT HAPPENED.
I...I DON'T KNOW! CAN'T REMEMBER ANYTHING SINCE THE COURTHOUSE YESTERDAY... WHEN THE ARRAIGNMENT WAS POSTPONED!
NOW DON'T THAT BEAT ALL? LOOKS LIKE AH FIN'LY GOT A SOLUTION TO TH' "CHILD-STALKER" CASE...ONLY AH DON'T KNOW WHUT IT IS.
AT LEAST YOU FOUND PAUL FOR ME, SHERIFF.
AND THANKS...
...'CAUSE WHEN HE DIDN'T SHOW UP AT OUR MOTEL LAST NIGHT...I GOTTA ADMIT I WAS WORRIED. BUT WHAT ABOUT THAT LITTLE MUTE-GIRL? WASN'T SHE SPOTTED WITH HIM?
YUP... BUT SHE JUST VANISHED--LIKE INTA THIN AIR.
TRUTH TA TELL, AH'M MORE INNERESTED IN THAT BIG GREEN CRITTER--
SHERIFF, I BELIEVE THIS IS AN HISTORIC MOMENT. I THINK THIS IS THE FIRST ACTUAL CAPTURE OF ONE OF THOSE "SWAMP MEN" PEOPLE CLAIM TO HAVE SEEN.
I WROTE A BOOK ABOUT THEM--
AH KNOW. BUT WHUTCHA GONNA DO WITH THAT THANG?
WELL, IT'S BADLY INJURED... FLESH WOUNDS... THIRD-DEGREE BURNS...EVEN FROSTBITE. I'M HAVING IT SHIPPED TO A SPECIAL PRIVATE CLINIC..
THEY'LL ANALYZE IT AND TREAT IT--IF THAT'S POSSIBLE. IT'S A VERY GOOD PLACE--RUN BY THE CONGLOMORATE I WORK FOR.
WHUT COMPANY IS THAT?
THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION.
PINEBORO, MUCH LATER. A SADDER BUT WISER CITY? PERHAPS...PERHAPS NOT.
REMEMBER, BOYS AND GIRLS, AUNT POLLY SAYS...
NOK NOK
EES SOMEONE AT THE DOOR, ROSITA. SEE WHO EET EES, CARITA?
♪GIVE THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT..
♪...WHEN YOU TRUST, IT ALL WORKS OUT...♪
C'MON IN--IT'S OPEN...
TO THE GOOD PEOPLE OF ATLANTA, THAT THEY MAY PUT THE HORROR BEHIND THEM...BUT NOT FORGET.
NEXT: THE SCREAMS OF HUNGRY FLESH!

DC
The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
60¢
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NO. 5
SEPT.
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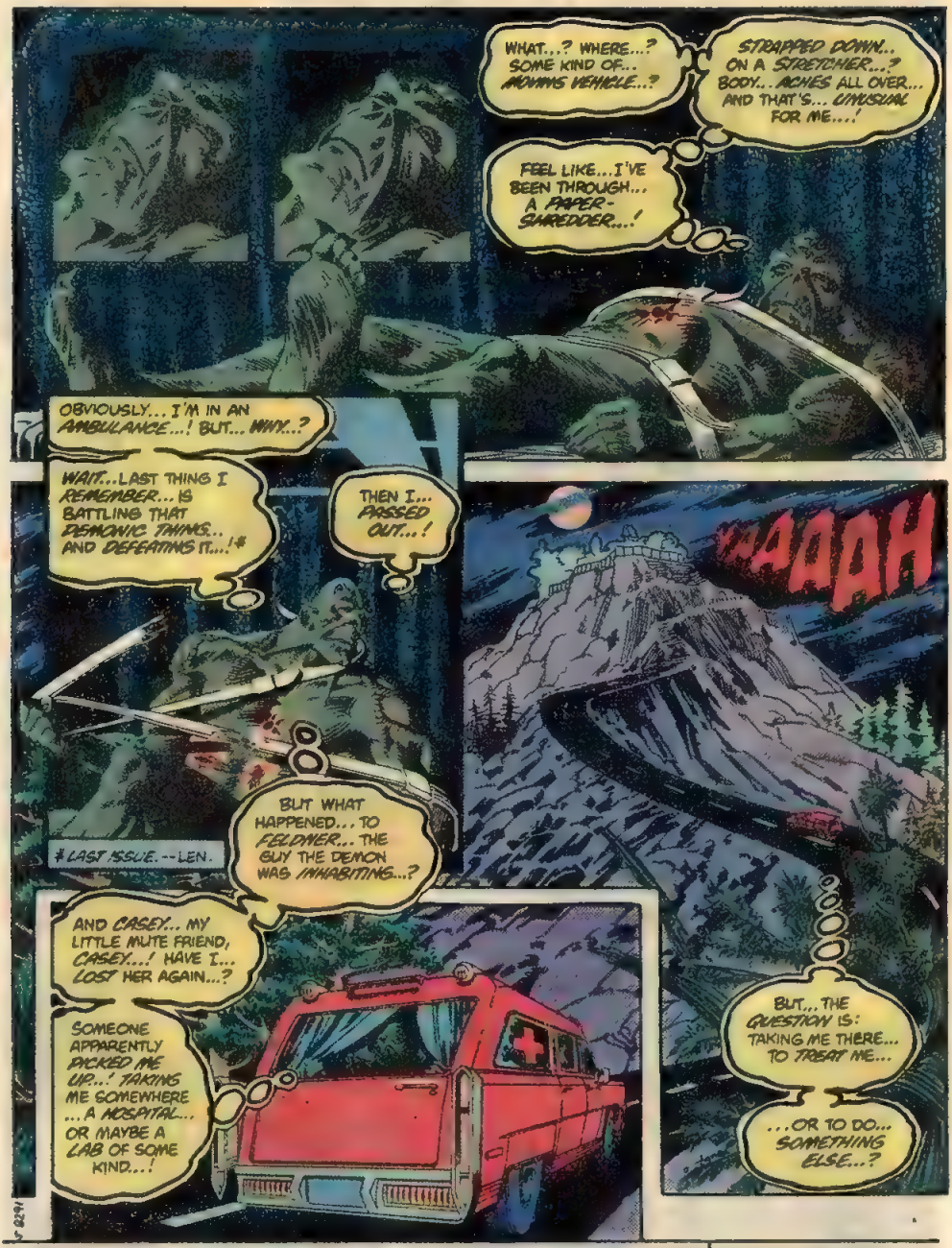
WHERE THE ACTION IS!
T. YEATES


WHAT...? WHERE...? SOME KIND OF... MOVING VEHICLE...?
STRAPPED DOWN... ON A STRETCHER...? BODY... ACHES ALL OVER... AND THAT'S... UNUSUAL FOR ME....!
FEEL LIKE... I'VE BEEN THROUGH... A PAPER-SHREDDER...!
OBVIOUSLY... I'M IN AN AMBULANCE...! BUT... WHY...?
WAIT... LAST THING I REMEMBER... IS BATTLING THAT DEMONIC THING... AND DEFEATING IT...!
THEN I... PASSED OUT...!
WAAAH
LAST ISSUE. --LEN.
BUT WHAT HAPPENED... TO FELDNER... THE GUY THE DEMON WAS INHABITING...?
AND CASEY... MY LITTLE MUTE FRIEND, CASEY...! HAVE I... LOST HER AGAIN...?
SOMEONE APPARENTLY PICKED ME UP...! TAKING ME SOMEWHERE ... A HOSPITAL... OR MAYBE A LAB OF SOME KIND...!
BUT... THE QUESTION IS: TAKING ME THERE... TO TREAT ME...
...OR TO DO... SOMETHING ELSE...?

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THE VOICES OF THE SWAMP THING'S CAPTORS ARE MUFFLED WHEN HE FIRST HEARS THEM.
NO MATTER. THEIR WORDS DO LITTLE TO MITIGATE HIS APPREHENSION.
MURCH, WHAT THE HELL IS THAT THING BACK THERE?
YOU'RE KIDDING, RIGHT? YOU DON'T KNOW?
THE BARCLAY CLINIC OWNED AND OPERATED BY EMPLOYEE HEALTH SERVICES INC. A SUNDERLAND COMPANY
NO TRESPASSING
AUTHORIZED PERSONNEL ONLY
EVER READ THAT BOOK BY THE TREMAYNE WOMAN -- "SWAMP MAN: FACT OR MYTH?"
YEAH...
WELL, TESS, THAT'S A SWAMP-MAN. AND TREMAYNE CALLED IN THE PICK-UP.
MAKES SENSE -- I HEAR THE COMPANY'S BEEN AFTER HIM FOR YEARS.
UH-HUNH. I GUESS TREMAYNE'S A SPECIAL SERVICES EMPLOYEE. PROBABLY REPORTS DIRECTLY TO THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE.
I MEAN, IT FIGURES -- IF SHE DELIVERED HIM, RIGHT?
'EVENIN', MURCHISON... TESS. GO ON THROUGH -- DR. BARCLAY'S EXPECTING YOU.
GAAAAH
YEAH, I'LL BET HE -- HUH?
KREEEEUMP
'THOSE SCREAMS... FROM INSIDE THAT... "CLINIC"...!'
COULD BE... A REASONABLE EXPLANATION FOR THEM...
...BUT ONLY A FOOL... WOULD WAIT AROUND... TO FIND OUT... IF THERE IS...!'
EMERGENCY! EMERGENCY! DISTURBANCE AT CHECKPOINT ONE! ALERT DR. BARCLAY -- STAT!
2

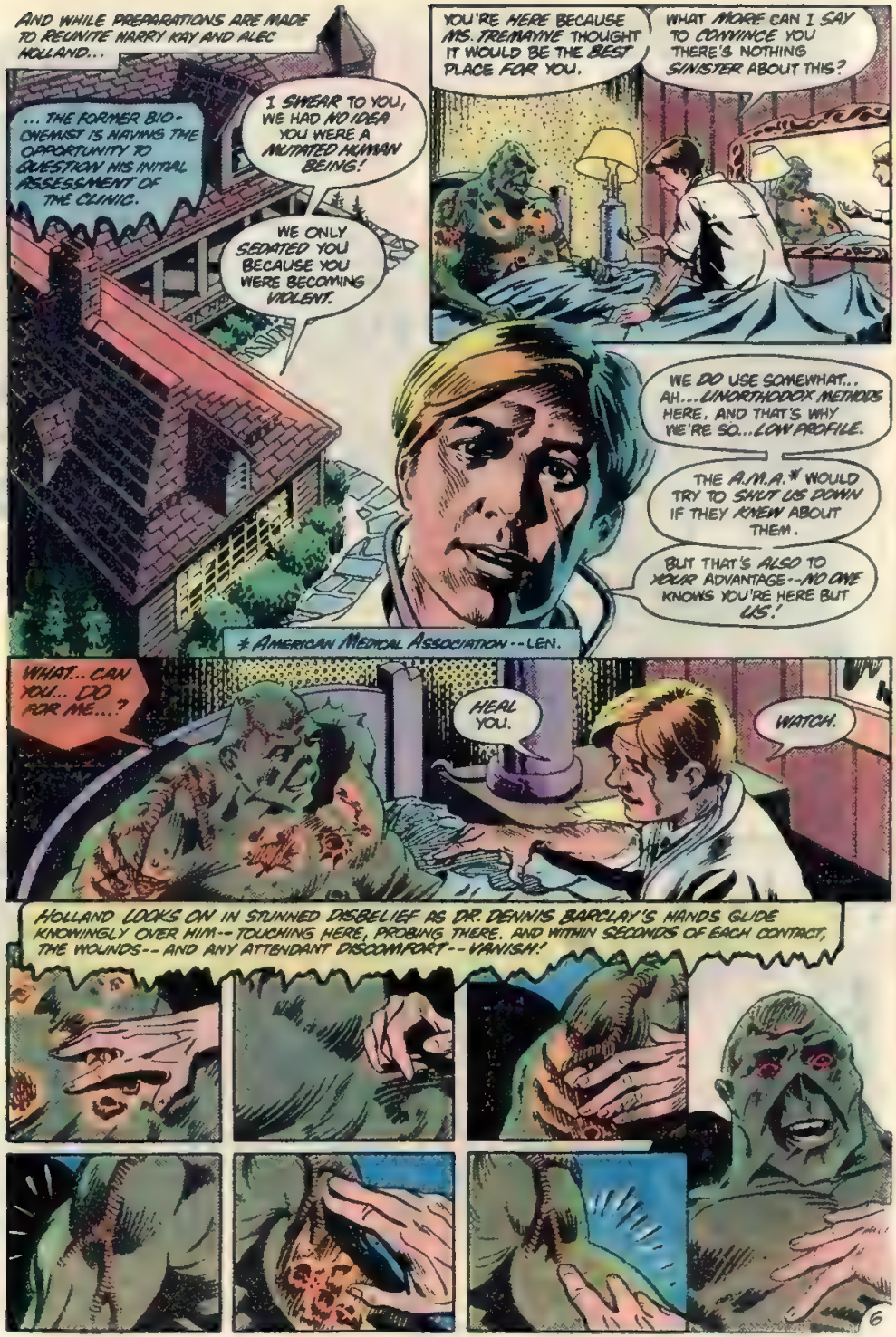
THE STAFF OF THE BARCLAY CLINIC HAS BEEN WELL-CHOSEN. THEIR REFLEXES ARE SHARP.
THEY HAVE ALSO BEEN WELL-TRAINED. THEY USE THOSE REFLEXES WELL.
BUT THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND REPRESENTS A SITUATION FOR WHICH HIS ANTAGONISTS COULD NOT POSSIBLY BE PREPARED. HE ALWAYS DOES.
FOR HIS BULK IS DECEPTIVE. HIS REFLEXES ARE SHARPER THAN THE STAFF'S. AND HE USES THEM BETTER.
SWAMP THING
created by: LEN WEIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON
AUTHOL PERSO
THIS THEY WILL LEARN SOON...
...AND, PROBABLY, PAINFULLY.
THE SCREAMS of HUNGRY FLESH
A MARTIN PASKO (writer) TOM YEATES (artist) LEN WEIN (editor) presentation
assisted by: TATJANA WOOD (colorist) JOHN COSTANZA (letterer)
3

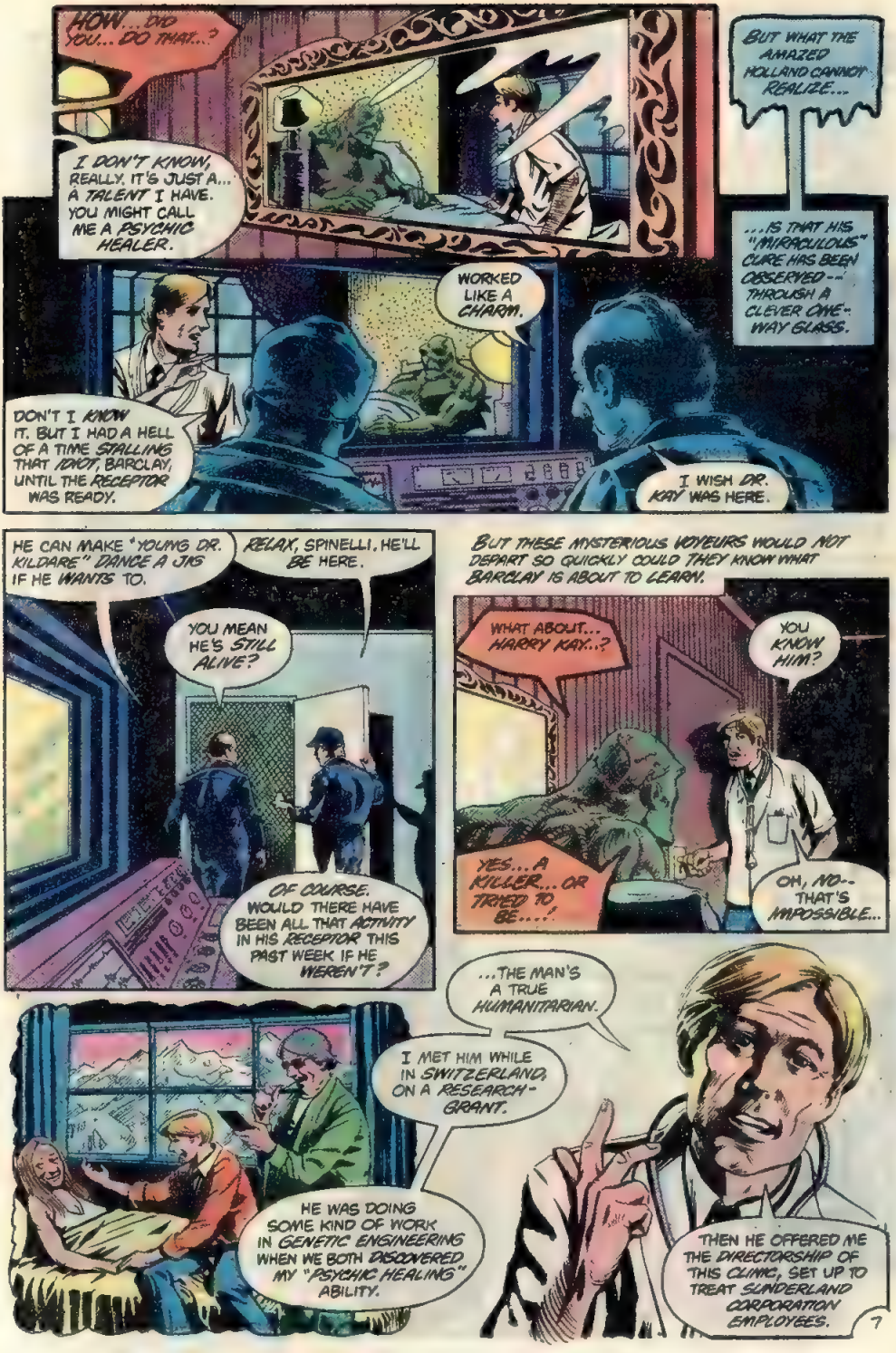
WHILE IN ARKANSAS, THE WOMAN WHO HAS SENT THEM THEIR PAIN IS HERSELF HAVING AN UNPLEASANT SURPRISE.
YOU'RE SURE MR. FELDNER HASN'T CHECKED OUT? HE'S NOT IN HIS ROOM--
Y'ALL CAN GIVE THIS HEAH CLERK TH' THIRD DEGREE TILL THE COWS COME HOME, MIZ TREMAYNE...
SHERIDAN
...BUT FACTS ARE STILL FACTS. SOON AS AH WAS SATISFIED YUH ASSOCIATE PRODUCAH WASN'T RESPONSIBLE FUH TH' CHILD-KILLIN'S...
...HE DISAPPEARED WITHOUT A TRACE--ALONG WITH TH' LI'L MUTE-GAL.
I'M NOT SO SURE THERE'S A CONNECTION, SHERIFF.
PAUL PROBABLY JUST HEADED BACK TO THE "IN-DEPTH MAGAZINE" STUDIOS IN L.A.
MEBBE SO...BUT MEANTAHIM AH'M GONNA KEEP A-LOOKIN'.
AH CAN TELL YOU A MITE HEARTENED, MISS. AH WANNA HE'P.
WHY ARE YOU BEING SO SOLICITOUS ALL OF A SUDDEN, BINGHAM?
WAY AH SEE IT, YUH FRIEND, THAT BIG SWAMP-FELLER, SOLVED TH' CHILD-KILLIN' CASE FUH ME.
AH STILL DON'T UNNERSTAN' IT ALL--BUT 'LEAST, THE CASE IS CLOSED...AN' AH'M GRATEFUL.
WELL, THANKS ANYWAY--BUT THAT THING'S NOT MY "FRIEND." I JUST WROTE A SPECULATIVE BOOK ON THE SUBJECT, THAT'S ALL.
I WASN'T EVEN SURE IT EXISTED TILL TWO DAYS AGO...
TAXI
--HE'S USED IT ON THIS CREATURE BEFORE.
HARRY KAY...?! THAT WAS THE GUY WHO TRIED TO KILL CASEY...!
HE'S DEAD...BUT...BUT THIS STILL MEANS...
...DEAR LORD, I'M IN... THEIR HANDS AGAIN...!
"...BUT NOW I'LL BE ABLE TO PROVE IT--IF MY COMPANY'S PRIVATE CLINIC CAN KEEP IT ALIVE."
DOCTOR, IT'S TAKEN FIVE OF US JUST TO RESTRAIN THIS THING!
YOU SURE A DRUG'S GONNA WORK?
THIS ONE WILL, ACCORDING TO DR. KAY, AND HARRY SHOULD KNOW--

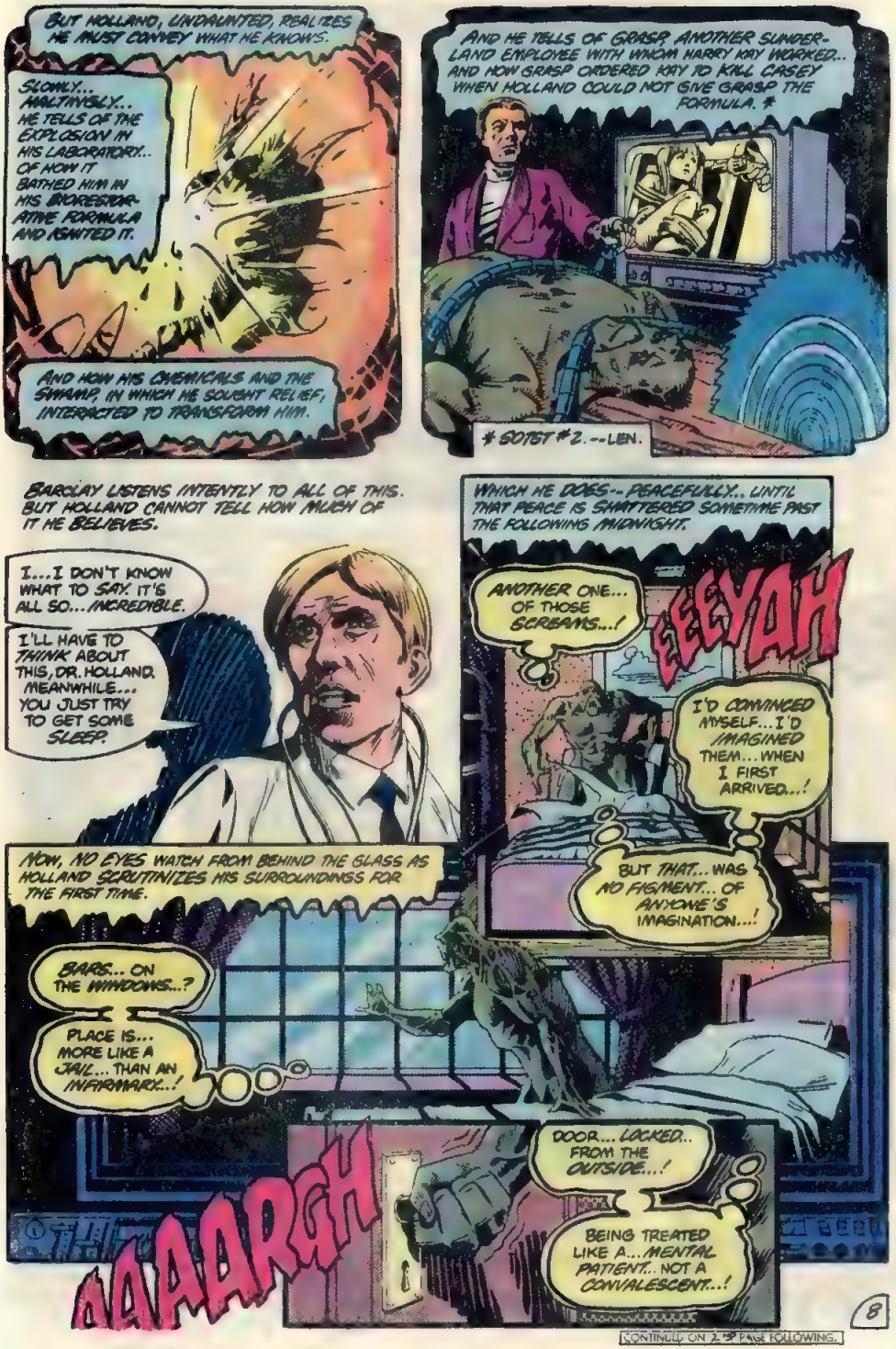
SOTBT #2--LEN.

CONTINUED ON 3rd PAGE FOLLOWING

HE IS INDEED--EVEN IF HE IS STILL NOT CERTAIN JUST WHO "THEY" ARE. BUT THERE IS SOMETHING ELSE OF WHICH ALEC HOLLAND IS UNAWARE:
THE MAN HE KNOWS AS HARRY KAY IS NOT DEAD--NOT QUITE.
ONE WEEK AGO:
THE BURNING...! THE AGONY! IT IS AS IF I HAD SURVIVED DRESDEN..!
BUT I HAVE SURVIVED... THANKS TO MY EXPERIMENTS.
AND I WILL LIVE--TO MAKE THE ONES WHO DID THIS TO ME PAY!
FOR THE NEXT FIVE DAYS, HE WANDERED--AIMLESSLY AND IN SEARING PAIN--THROUGH THE FORESTS OF THE NORTH CAROLINA SMOKIES, SEARCHING FOR SOME POCKET OF HABITATION.
HE FOUND IT.
IT TOOK ANOTHER DAY TO FIND A DIME BY THE ROADSIDE, THEN LOCATE A PAY-PHONE.
LEPHON
SPECIAL SERVICES CENTRAL. STATE YOUR EMPLOYEE NUMBER AND IDENTIFICATION-CODE, PLEASE. YOU ARE BEING RECORDED.
THIS IS EMPLOYEE NUMBER 4367239. IDENTIFICATION-CODE: HARRY KAY.
I SHOW THAT EMPLOYEE LISTED AS "BELIEVED DECEASED." PLEASE HOLD FOR VOICE-PRINT ANALYSIS OF RECORDING.
ALL RIGHT, BUT BE QUICK ABOUT IT. I'M FREEZING.
YOUR IDENTITY IS CONFIRMED, DR. KAY. GO AHEAD, PLEASE. AND CONGRATULATIONS ON YOUR SURVIVAL.
JUST GIVE ME MY NEW ORDERS, CENTRAL.
YOU ARE TO RETURN TO STATION SD-5--
THE CLIMO? WHY?
I HAVE NOTHING OFFICIAL ON THAT, SIR--BUT THERE'S A RUMOR ABOUT ALEC HOLLAND BEING THERE.
STATE YOUR LOCATION AND I'LL HAVE A UNIT PICK YOU UP..
5


AND WHILE PREPARATIONS ARE MADE TO REUNITE HARRY KAY AND ALEC HOLLAND...
... THE FORMER BIO-CHEMIST IS HAVING THE OPPORTUNITY TO QUESTION HIS INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF THE CLINIC.
I SWEAR TO YOU, WE HAD NO IDEA YOU WERE A MUTATED HUMAN BEING!
WE ONLY SEDATED YOU BECAUSE YOU WERE BECOMING VIOLENT.
YOU'RE HERE BECAUSE MS. TREMAYNE THOUGHT IT WOULD BE THE BEST PLACE FOR YOU.
WHAT MORE CAN I SAY TO CONVINCE YOU THERE'S NOTHING SINISTER ABOUT THIS?
WE DO USE SOMEWHAT... AH... UNORTHODOX METHODS HERE, AND THAT'S WHY WE'RE SO... LOW PROFILE.
THE A.M.A.* WOULD TRY TO SHUT US DOWN IF THEY KNEW ABOUT THEM.
BUT THAT'S ALSO TO YOUR ADVANTAGE--NO ONE KNOWS YOU'RE HERE BUT US!
* AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION--LEN.
WHAT... CAN YOU... DO FOR ME...?
HEAL YOU.
WATCH.
HOLLAND LOOKS ON IN STUNNED DISBELIEF AS DR. DENNIS BARCLAY'S HANDS GLIDE KNOWINGLY OVER HIM--TOUCHING HERE, PROBING THERE. AND WITHIN SECONDS OF EACH CONTACT, THE WOUNDS--AND ANY ATTENDANT DISCOMFORT--VANISH!


HOW... DID YOU... DO THAT...?
I DON'T KNOW, REALLY. IT'S JUST A... A TALENT I HAVE. YOU MIGHT CALL ME A PSYCHIC HEALER.
BUT WHAT THE AMAZED HOLLAND CANNOT REALIZE...
...IS THAT HIS "MIRACULOUS" CURE HAS BEEN OBSERVED -- THROUGH A CLEVER ONE-WAY GLASS.
WORKED LIKE A CHARM.
DON'T I KNOW IT. BUT I HAD A HELL OF A TIME STALLING THAT IDIOT, BARCLAY, UNTIL THE RECEPTOR WAS READY.
I WISH DR. KAY WAS HERE.
HE CAN MAKE "YOUNG DR. KILDARE" DANCE A JIG IF HE WANTS TO.
RELAX, SPINELLI. HE'LL BE HERE.
YOU MEAN HE'S STILL ALIVE?
OF COURSE. WOULD THERE HAVE BEEN ALL THAT ACTIVITY IN HIS RECEPTOR THIS PAST WEEK IF HE WEREN'T?
BUT THESE MYSTERIOUS VOYEURS WOULD NOT DEPART SO QUICKLY COULD THEY KNOW WHAT BARCLAY IS ABOUT TO LEARN.
WHAT ABOUT... HARRY KAY...?
YOU KNOW HIM?
YES... A KILLER... OR TRIED TO BE....
OH, NO-- THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE...
...THE MAN'S A TRUE HUMANITARIAN.
I MET HIM WHILE IN SWITZERLAND, ON A RESEARCH-GRANT.
HE WAS DOING SOME KIND OF WORK IN GENETIC ENGINEERING WHEN WE BOTH DISCOVERED MY "PSYCHIC HEALING" ABILITY.
THEN HE OFFERED ME THE DIRECTORSHIP OF THIS CLINIC, SET UP TO TREAT SUNDERLAND CORPORATION EMPLOYEES.


BUT HOLLAND, UNDAUNTED, REALIZES HE MUST CONVEY WHAT HE KNOWS.
SLOWLY... PAINFULLY... HE TELLS OF THE EXPLOSION IN HIS LABORATORY... OF HOW IT BATHED HIM IN HIS DEGENERATIVE FORMULA AND AGANTED IT.
AND HOW HIS CHEMICALS AND THE SWAMP, IN WHICH HE SOUGHT RELIEF, INTERACTED TO TRANSFORM HIM.
AND HE TELLS OF GRASP ANOTHER SLANDERLAND EMPLOYEE WITH WHOM HARRY KAY WORKED... AND HOW GRASP ORDERED KAY TO KILL CASEY WHEN HOLLAND COULD NOT GIVE GRASP THE FORMULA. #
SOTBT #2. --LEN.
BARCLAY LISTENS INTENTLY TO ALL OF THIS. BUT HOLLAND CANNOT TELL HOW MUCH OF IT HE BELIEVES.
I... I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY. IT'S ALL SO... INCREDIBLE.
I'LL HAVE TO THINK ABOUT THIS, DR. HOLLAND. MEANWHILE... YOU JUST TRY TO GET SOME SLEEP.
WHICH HE DOES -- PEACEFULLY... UNTIL THAT PEACE IS SHATTERED SOMETIME PAST THE FOLLOWING MIDNIGHT.
ANOTHER ONE... OF THOSE SCREAMS...!
EEEYAH
I'D CONVINCED MYSELF... I'D IMAGINED THEM... WHEN I FIRST ARRIVED...!
BUT THAT... WAS NO FIGMENT... OF ANYONE'S IMAGINATION...!
NOW, NO EYES WATCH FROM BEHIND THE GLASS AS HOLLAND SCRUTINIZES HIS SURROUNDINGS FOR THE FIRST TIME.
BARS... ON THE WINDOWS...?
PLACE IS... MORE LIKE A JAIL... THAN AN INFIRMARY...!
DOOR... LOCKED... FROM THE OUTSIDE...!
BEING TREATED LIKE A... MENTAL PATIENT... NOT A CONVALESCENT...!
AAARGH
8
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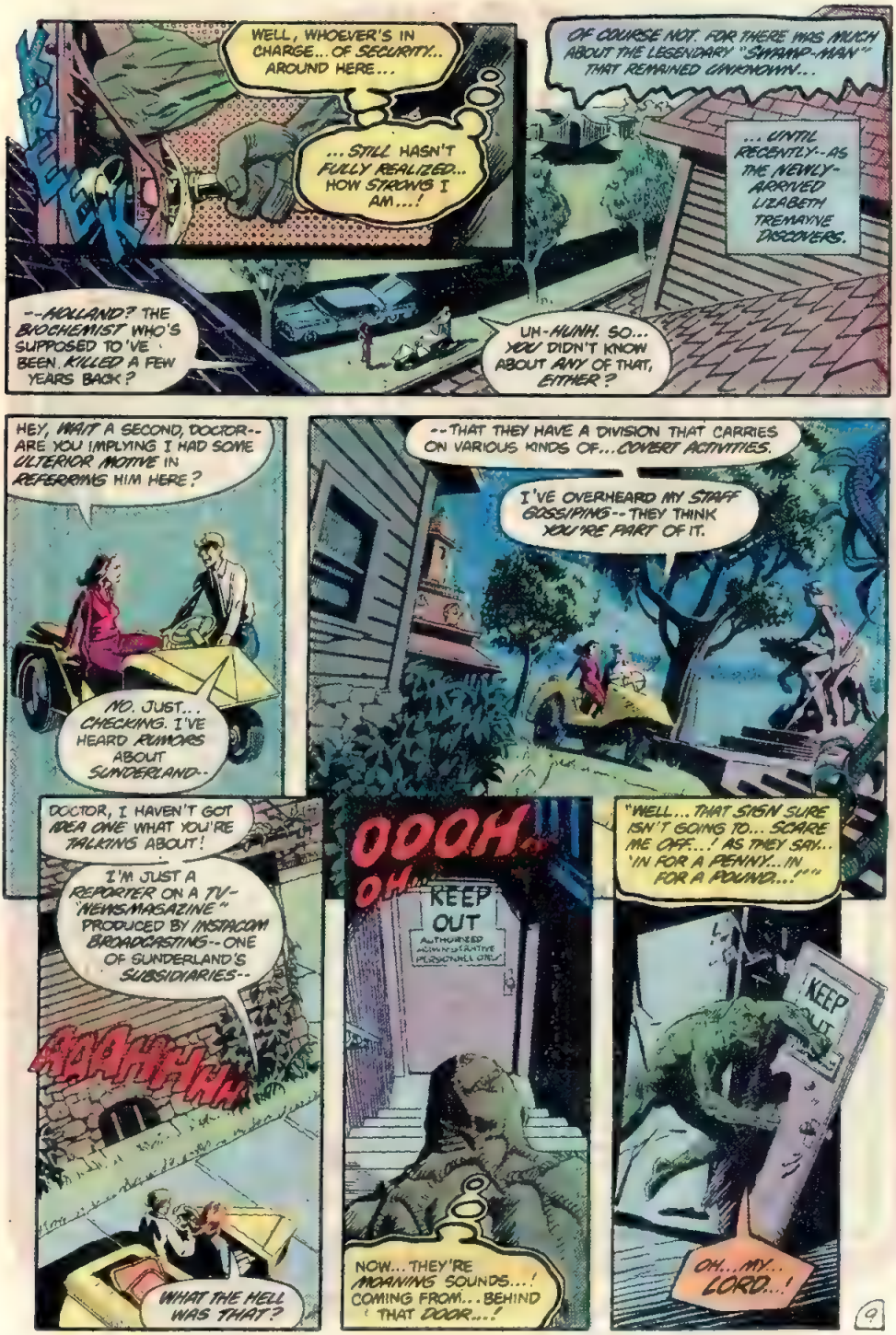
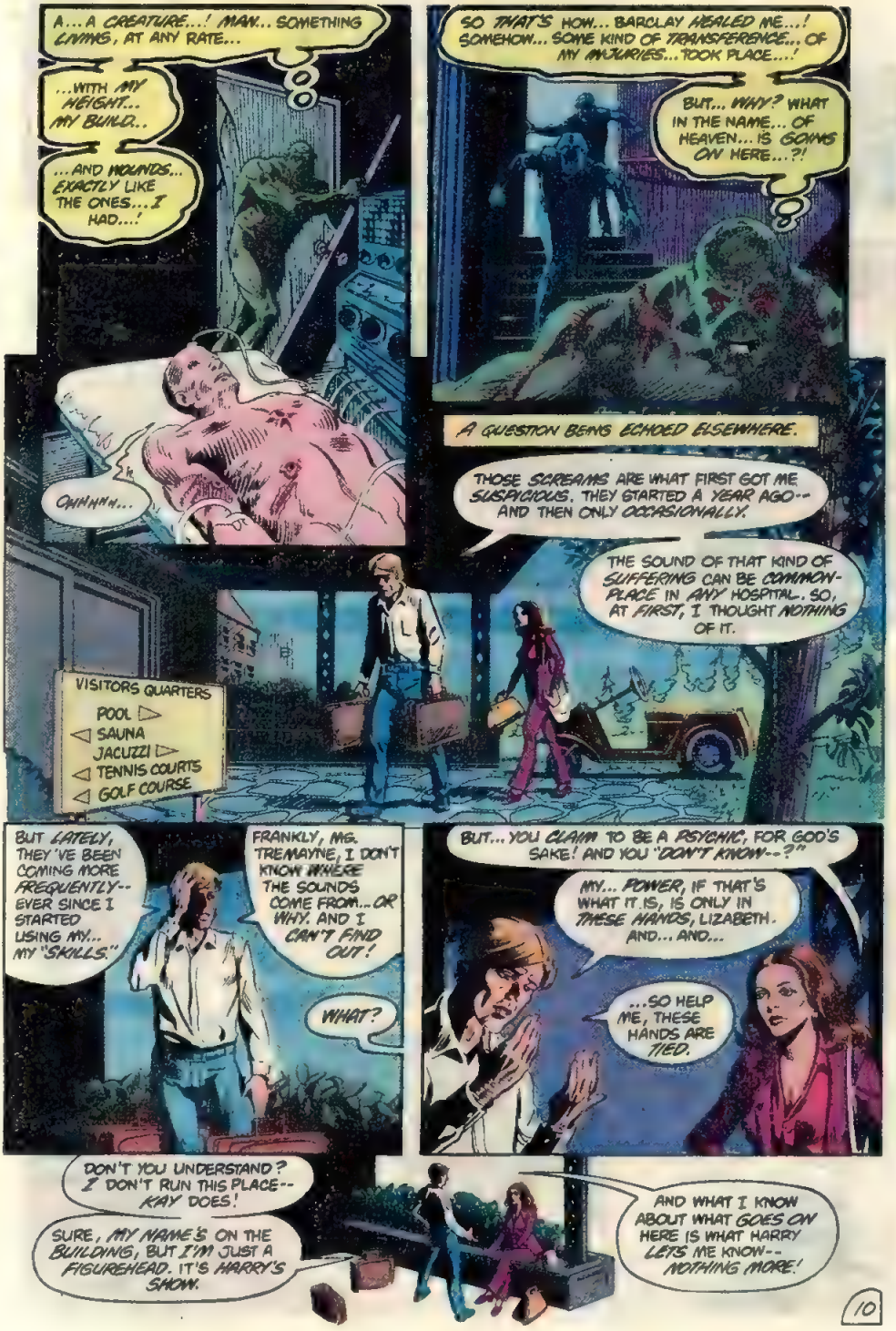
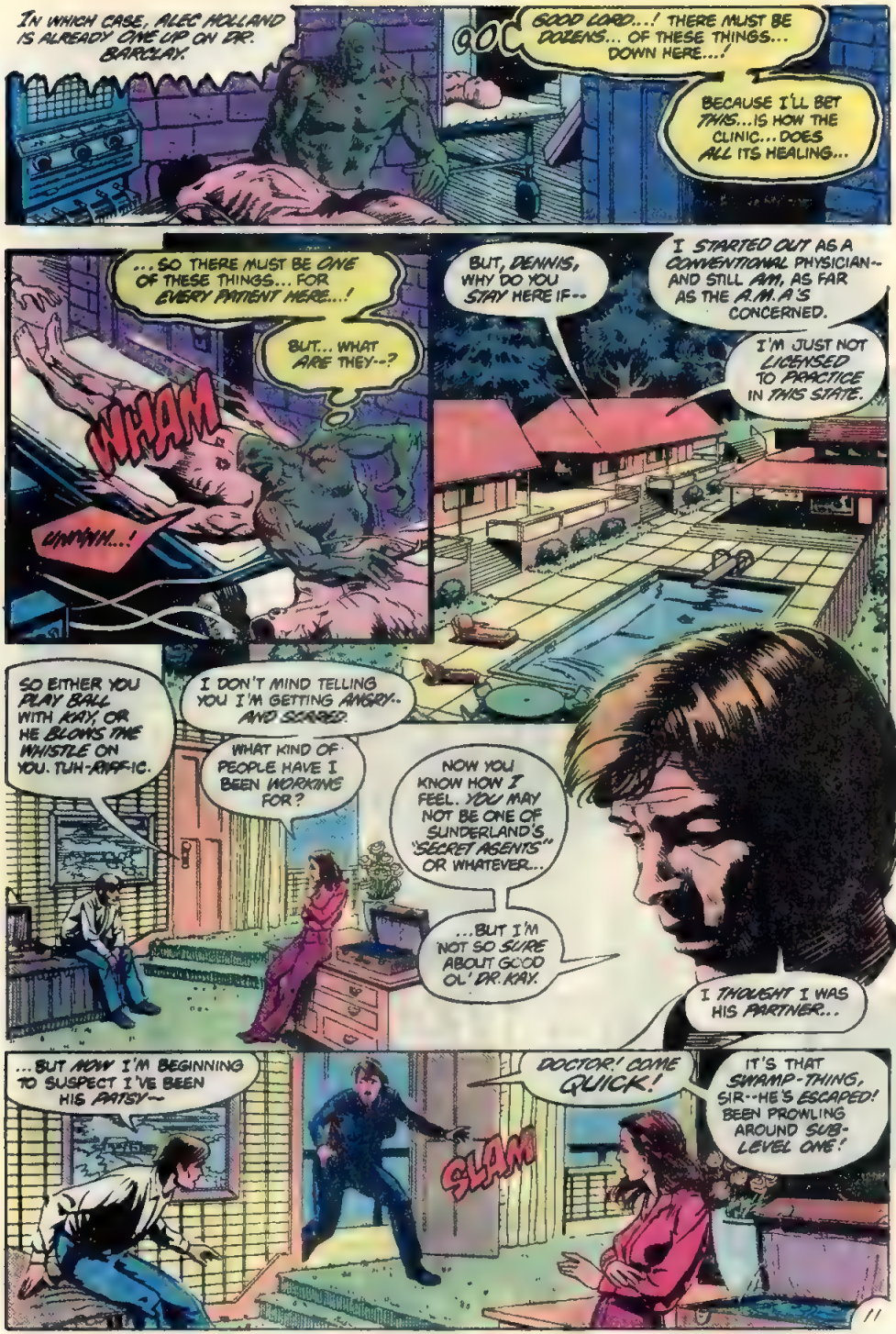

KRUEEK
WELL, WHOEVER'S IN CHARGE... OF SECURITY... AROUND HERE...
...STILL HASN'T FULLY REALIZED... HOW STRONG I AM...!
OF COURSE NOT. FOR THERE WAS MUCH ABOUT THE LEGENDARY "SWAMP-MAN" THAT REMAINED UNKNOWN...
...UNTIL RECENTLY--AS THE NEWLY-ARRIVED LIZABETH TREMAYNE DISCOVERS.
--HOLLAND? THE BIOCHEMIST WHO'S SUPPOSED TO'VE BEEN KILLED A FEW YEARS BACK?
UH-HUNH. SO... YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT ANY OF THAT, EITHER?
HEY, WAIT A SECOND, DOCTOR-- ARE YOU IMPLYING I HAD SOME ULTERIOR MOTIVE IN REFERRING HIM HERE?
NO. JUST... CHECKING. I'VE HEARD RUMORS ABOUT SUNDERLAND--
--THAT THEY HAVE A DIVISION THAT CARRIES ON VARIOUS KINDS OF... COVERT ACTIVITIES.
I'VE OVERHEARD MY STAFF GOSSIPING-- THEY THINK YOU'RE PART OF IT.
DOCTOR, I HAVEN'T GOT IDEA ONE WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT!
I'M JUST A REPORTER ON A TV-"NEWSMAGAZINE" PRODUCED BY INSTACOM BROADCASTING-- ONE OF SUNDERLAND'S SUBSIDIARIES--
AAAHHHH
WHAT THE HELL WAS THAT?
OOOH... OH...
KEEP OUT
AUTHORIZED ADMINISTRATIVE PERSONNEL ONLY
NOW... THEY'RE MOANING SOUNDS...! COMING FROM... BEHIND THAT DOOR...!
"WELL... THAT SIGN SURE ISN'T GOING TO... SCARE ME OFF...! AS THEY SAY... 'IN FOR A PENNY... IN FOR A POUND...!'"
KEEP OUT
OH... MY... LORD...!


A... A CREATURE...! MAN... SOMETHING LIVING, AT ANY RATE...
...WITH MY HEIGHT... MY BUILD...
...AND MOUNDS... EXACTLY LIKE THE ONES... I HAD...!
OWHHHH...
SO THAT'S HOW... BARCLAY HEALED ME...! SOMEHOW... SOME KIND OF TRANSFERENCE... OF MY INJURIES... TOOK PLACE...!
BUT... WHY? WHAT IN THE NAME... OF HEAVEN... IS GOING ON HERE...?!
A QUESTION BEING ECHOED ELSEWHERE.
THOSE SCREAMS ARE WHAT FIRST GOT ME SUSPICIOUS. THEY STARTED A YEAR AGO-- AND THEN ONLY OCCASIONALLY.
THE SOUND OF THAT KIND OF SUFFERING CAN BE COMMONPLACE IN ANY HOSPITAL. SO, AT FIRST, I THOUGHT NOTHING OF IT.
VISITORS QUARTERS
POOL
SAUNA
JACUZZI
TENNIS COURTS
GOLF COURSE
BUT LATELY, THEY'VE BEEN COMING MORE FREQUENTLY-- EVER SINCE I STARTED USING MY... MY "SKILLS."
FRANKLY, MR. TREMAYNE, I DON'T KNOW WHERE THE SOUNDS COME FROM... OR WHY. AND I CAN'T FIND OUT!
WHAT?
BUT... YOU CLAIM TO BE A PSYCHIC, FOR GOD'S SAKE! AND YOU "DON'T KNOW--?"
MY... POWER, IF THAT'S WHAT IT IS, IS ONLY IN THESE HANDS, LIZABETH. AND... AND...
...SO HELP ME, THESE HANDS ARE TIED.
DON'T YOU UNDERSTAND? I DON'T RUN THIS PLACE-- KAY DOES!
SURE, MY NAME'S ON THE BUILDING, BUT I'M JUST A FIGUREHEAD. IT'S HARRY'S SHOW.
AND WHAT I KNOW ABOUT WHAT GOES ON HERE IS WHAT HARRY LETS ME KNOW-- NOTHING MORE!


IN WHICH CASE, ALEC HOLLAND IS ALREADY ONE UP ON DR. BARCLAY.
GOOD LORD...! THERE MUST BE DOZENS... OF THESE THINGS... DOWN HERE...!
BECAUSE I'LL BET THIS...IS HOW THE CLINIC... DOES ALL ITS HEALING...
...SO THERE MUST BE ONE OF THESE THINGS... FOR EVERY PATIENT HERE...!
BUT... WHAT ARE THEY--?
WHAM
UNNHH...!
BUT, DENNIS, WHY DO YOU STAY HERE IF--
I STARTED OUT AS A CONVENTIONAL PHYSICIAN--AND STILL AM, AS FAR AS THE A.M.A.'S CONCERNED.
I'M JUST NOT LICENSED TO PRACTICE IN THIS STATE.
SO EITHER YOU PLAY BALL WITH KAY, OR HE BLOWS THE WHISTLE ON YOU. TUH-RIFF-IC.
I DON'T MIND TELLING YOU I'M GETTING ANGRY--AND SCARED.
WHAT KIND OF PEOPLE HAVE I BEEN WORKING FOR?
NOW YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL. YOU MAY NOT BE ONE OF SUNDERLAND'S "SECRET AGENTS" OR WHATEVER...
...BUT I'M NOT SO SURE ABOUT GOOD OL' DR. KAY.
I THOUGHT I WAS HIS PARTNER...
...BUT NOW I'M BEGINNING TO SUSPECT I'VE BEEN HIS PATSY--
DOCTOR! COME QUICK!
IT'S THAT SWAMP-THING, SIR--HE'S ESCAPED! BEEN PROWLING AROUND SUB-LEVEL ONE!
SLAM

"DENBERG AND GALWAY CAUGHT HIM AT IT—BUT HE'S GETTIN' VIOLENT AGAIN!"

LET... GO OF ME...! LET GO...!

HOLD IT, SPINELLI! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!

I...AH... THE PATIENT, SIR... I... HE... HAS TO BE SUBDUED.

HE'S VIOLENT.

SURE HE IS--IF YOU ATTACK HIM. WE'LL TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR HIM.

MISS TREMAYNE HERE KNOWS HIM. WE HAVE... MATTERS TO DISCUSS.

WITH ALL DUE RESPECT, DR. BARCLAY, YOU DO REALIZE THIS AREA IS OFF-LIMITS... EVEN TO YOU--?

ARE YOU QUESTIONING MY AUTHORITY, SPINELLI?

NOSSIR... JUST SO YOU UNDERSTAND I'LL HAVE TO REPORT THIS TO DR. KAY.

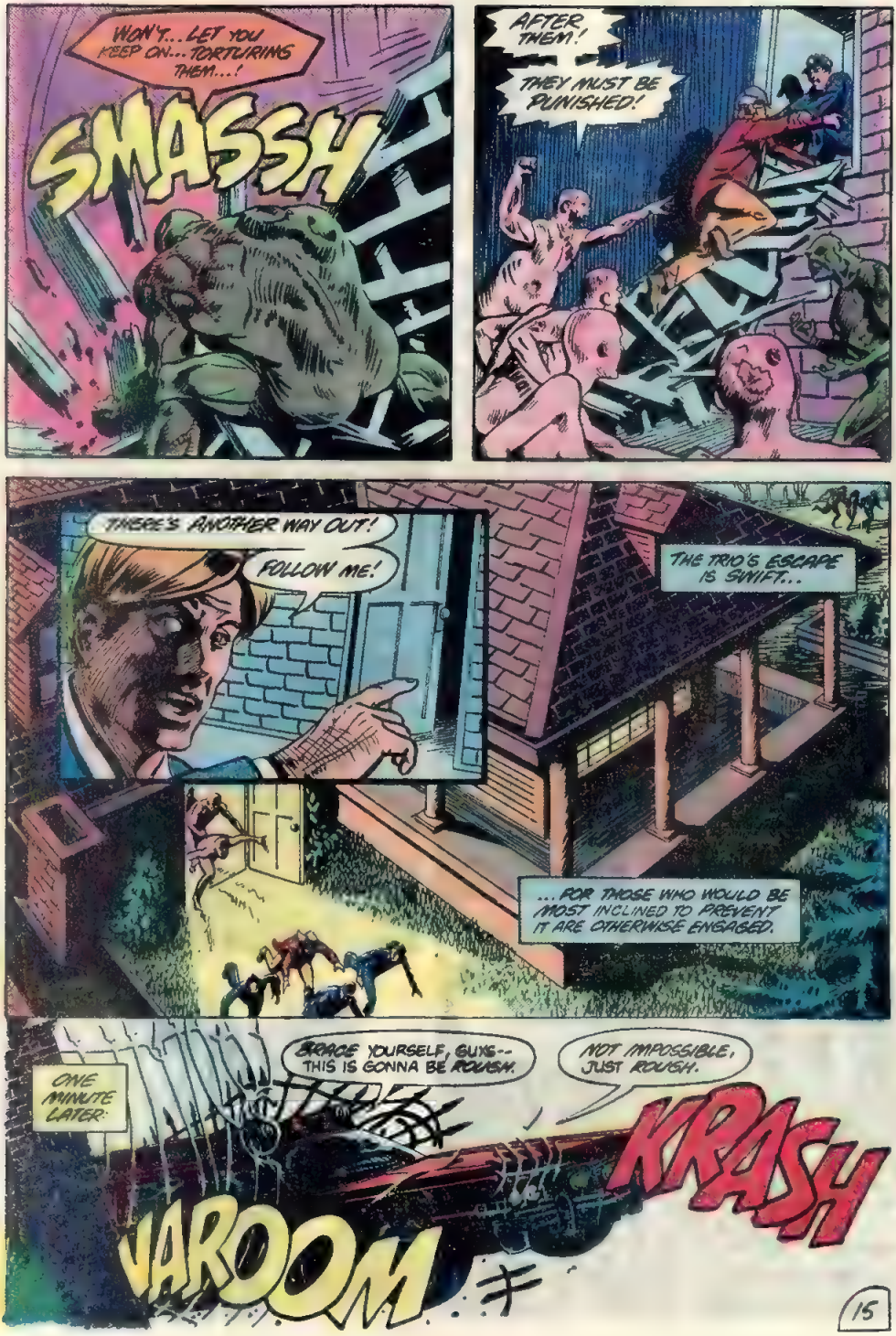
I DON'T GIVE A DAMN WHAT YOU DO.

Liz and I convinced danger here—play along, and we'll all get out.

Barclay

WITHIN THE HOUR, THE PLAN IS MADE, AND IN BARCLAY'S OFFICE, THE DOCTOR AND ALEC HOLLAND AWAIT THE COMPLETION OF PHASE ONE.
AT LEAST HARRY WAS TELLING THE TRUTH ABOUT YOU, ALEC, WHEN HE SAID YOU WERE DYING.
THERE DOES SEEM TO BE SOME KIND OF DEGENERATION OF THE TISSUES.
BUT AFTER WE GET OUT OF HERE, MAYBE I CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT--
LIZ! DID YOU GET US A CAR--?
MAKING SURE NOBODY CAUGHT ME AT IT TOOK FOREVER--BUT YEAH!
THERE'S NOW AN AMBULANCE WAITING FOR US AT THE SOUTH GATE.
YOU'RE SURE THERE'S NO SECURITY CHECKPOINT THERE?
POSITIVE. AND THE GOONS WON'T TRY TO STOP ME FROM LEAVING UNLESS HARRY ORDERS IT--
--AND HE'S NOT HERE YET. SO C'MON...
"...IF WE WANT TO CHECK OUT WHAT ALEC SAW DOWN ON SUB-ONE, THIS IS THE ONLY CHANCE WE'RE GONNA GET."
THEY LOOK LIKE LIFE-SUPPORT SYSTEMS, DON'T THEY?
BUT NEAR AS I CAN FIGURE, THESE MACHINES HAVE BEEN KEEPING THESE..."PEOPLE" IN A SEMI-COMATOSE STATE.
BUT WHAT ARE THEY?
I DON'T KNOW, BUT THIS IS THE LAST OF THEM.
AND THE VERY FACT THAT WE'VE DISCONNECTED ALL OF THEM FROM THEIR MACHINES--WITHOUT ANYONE CATCHING US--IS MAKING ME SUSPI--
DR. BARCLAY.
WE ARE FULLY CONSCIOUS NOW...AND CAN FULLY FEEL THE HURTINGS. YOU MEANT WELL IN SETTING US FREE...
...BUT THE PAIN... IS AGONIZING...!
HARRY? HARRY KAY?!
NO. OVER HERE, DENNIS.
13

SO NOW YOU KNOW OUR LITTLE SECRET, DENNIS.
THOSE ARE THE RECEPTORS. THEY'RE TEST-TUBE BEINGS-- CREATED ARTIFICIALLY THROUGH MANIPULATION OF HUMAN REPRODUCTIVE CELLS.
I DEVELOPED THE FIRST--ME -- WHILE IN SWITZERLAND.
YOU NEVER HAD ANY "PSYCHIC" HEALING-POWERS, DENNIS. THAT WAS JUST A COVER FOR THE RECEPTORS.
YOU SEE, THEY'RE EMPATHIC-- THAT'S A GENUINE PSIONIC ABILITY THAT OUR PROCESS BREEDS INTO THEM.
THEY ABSORB ALL INJURY OR DISEASE FROM THE PATIENT THEY'RE "PROGRAMMED" TO HEAL...
...BY TRANSFERRING IT FROM THE SUBJECT TO THEMSELVES.
DON'T... WASTE YOUR ENERGY, HOLLAND...! YOU CAN'T HURT ME...!
AS LONG AS I'M... PSIONICALLY LINKED... TO MY RECEPTOR...
...HE ABSORBS INSTANTLY WHATEVER... PAIN YOU INFLICT...!
SEE? THAT'S HOW I SURVIVED THE FIRE YOU CAUSED AT GRASP'S HEADQUARTERS.
I BURNED... BUT THE RECEPTOR ABSORBED IT-- SCARS AND ALL.
THANKS TO THE RECEPTORS, NO VALUABLE SUNDERLAND EMPLOYEE NEED EVER MISS WORK-TIME BECAUSE OF DISABILITY.
AND IT'S PERFECTLY LEGAL. LAWS COVERING CREATURES LIKE THESE HAVEN'T EVEN BEEN WRITTEN YET.
YOU... FILTHY... SWINE...!
THEY'RE... STILL... HUMAN BEINGS...!
14

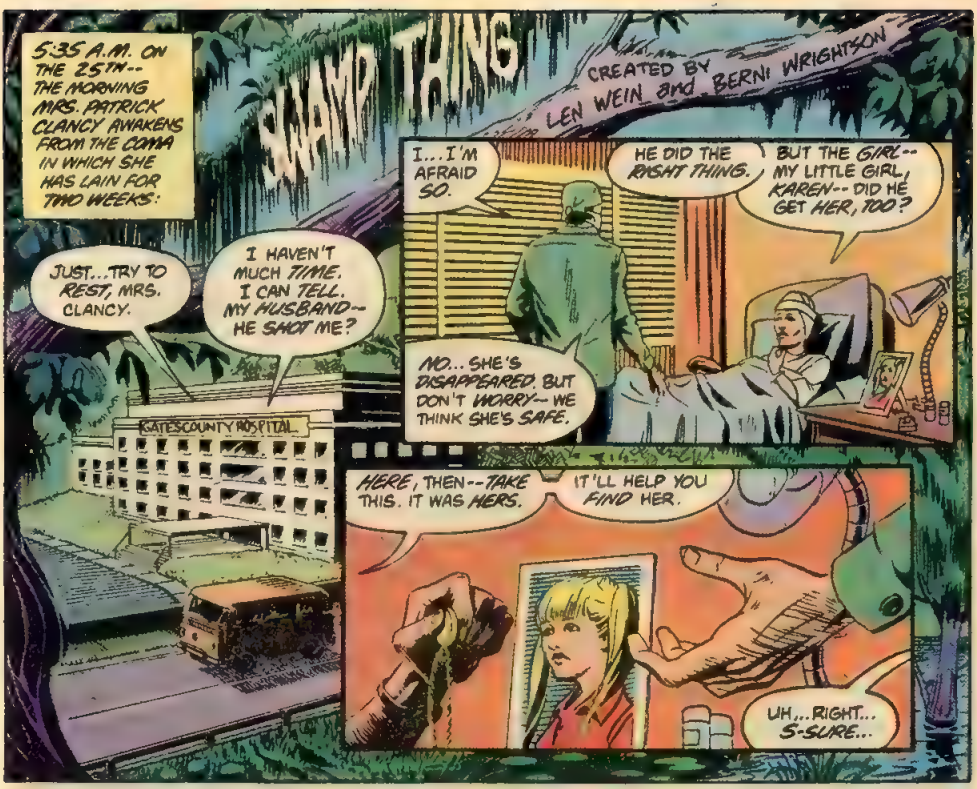

WON'T... LET YOU KEEP ON... TORTURING THEM...!
SMASSH
AFTER THEM!
THEY MUST BE PUNISHED!
THERE'S ANOTHER WAY OUT!
FOLLOW ME!
THE TRIO'S ESCAPE IS SWIFT...
...FOR THOSE WHO WOULD BE MOST INCLINED TO PREVENT IT ARE OTHERWISE ENGAGED.
ONE MINUTE LATER:
BRACE YOURSELF, GUYS-- THIS IS GONNA BE ROUSH.
NOT IMPOSSIBLE, JUST ROUSH.
KRASH
VAROOM

FOR HARRY KAY AND HIS "GOON SQUAD", HOWEVER, THE PROBABILITIES MUST BE CALCULATED LESS FAVORABLY.
COVER ME!
BUT... BUT DR. KAY-- THEY'RE READY TO KILL US!
WE QUITE PROBABLY COULD, MR. SPINELLI. BUT WILL WE? WE SHALL SEE.
SOMETHING YOU SHOULD LEARN ABOUT EMPATHS, DOCTOR KAY:
IF WE TRY HARD ENOUGH, WE CAN REVERSE THE PROCESS.
IF WE TRY, WE WHO HAVE TAKEN PAIN FOR SO LONG...
...CAN GIVE IT BACK.
NO!
AND WE ARE GOING TO TRY.
OOH
OOHH
NO! NOT ME!
NOT ME!
NO...PLEASE, NO! THE PAIN--!
DON'T DO THIS... PLEASE... DON'T!
YAAAAAH

I WISH YOU'D TOLD ME SOONER THAT THAT GATE WAS RUSTY, DENNIS.
AW, C'MON, LIZ, ADMIT IT--IT WAS FUN...
...WHICH IS MORE THAN YOU CAN SAY ABOUT WHAT OL' MARRY'S PROBABLY GOING THROUGH RIGHT NOW.
OH, YEAH? WELL, I COULDN'T POSSIBLY CARE LESS.
MY SENTIMENTS... EXACTLY...!
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED... HE CAN ROT IN HELL....!
BUT NONE OF THIS TRIO OF NEWFOUND ALLIES WILL BE SO FORTUNATE.
IDENTITY VERIFIED, DR. KAY. TRANSMIT YOUR PRIORITY-ONE MESSAGE.
ROGER, CENTRAL: "REQUEST EMERGENCY MEETING OF EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE--IMMEDIATELY. ABOARD S.S. HAVEN.
"SUBJECT: RE-CAPTURE OF THE 'SWAMP-THING,' ALEC HOLLAND... AND DISPOSITION OF TWO FORMER EMPLOYEES NOW IN POSSESSION OF HIGHLY CLASSIFIED INTELLIGENCE--WITHOUT CLEARANCE FOR SAME.
"OBJECT: DETERMINATION OF APPROPRIATE RESPONSE TO AFOREMENTIONED CONDITIONS." KAY, OUT.
WELL, DENNIS, I GUESS YOU'RE ONE DOCTOR WHO'S OUT OF A JOB. YOU CERTAINLY DON'T HAVE ANY PLACE TO GO.
BUT THEN, COME TO THINK OF IT, NEITHER DO I...
...AT LEAST, NOT AFTER I MAKE SURE PAUL IS ALL RIGHT.
LIZ, MAYBE YOU DON'T REALIZE THIS YET, BUT... WE'RE FUGITIVES.
THEN... I SUPPOSE WE COULD HELP ALEC FIND CASEY--
YES... SUNDERLAND...!
I WAS HOPING YOU WOULDN'T REMIND ME SO SOON. OBVIOUSLY, THEY WON'T ACCEPT OUR RESIGNATIONS--NOT WITH US KNOWING WHAT WE KNOW. GENTLEMEN, I HATE TO ADMIT IT--BUT WE ARE IN DEEP TROUBLE...

NEXT: ABOARD THE PLAGUE-SHIP

The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
60¢
U.K. 20p
CAN. 75¢
NO. 6
OCT.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
55 HAVEN
DC
WHERE THE ACTION IS!


SWAMP THING
CREATED BY LEN WEIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON
5:35 A.M. ON THE 25TH-- THE MORNING MRS. PATRICK CLANCY AWAKENS FROM THE COMA IN WHICH SHE HAS LAIN FOR TWO WEEKS:
JUST...TRY TO REST, MRS. CLANCY.
I HAVEN'T MUCH TIME. I CAN TELL. MY HUSBAND-- HE SHOT ME?
GATES COUNTY HOSPITAL
I...I'M AFRAID SO.
HE DID THE RIGHT THING.
BUT THE GIRL-- MY LITTLE GIRL, KAREN-- DID HE GET HER, TOO?
NO...SHE'S DISAPPEARED. BUT DON'T WORRY-- WE THINK SHE'S SAFE.
HERE, THEN--TAKE THIS. IT WAS HERS.
IT'LL HELP YOU FIND HER.
UH,...RIGHT... S-SURE...

THE SAGA OF SWAMP THING. Vol 1, No 6, October, 1982 Published monthly by DC COMICS INC , 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N Y 10019 Copyright © 1982 by DC Comics Inc All Rights Reserved The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

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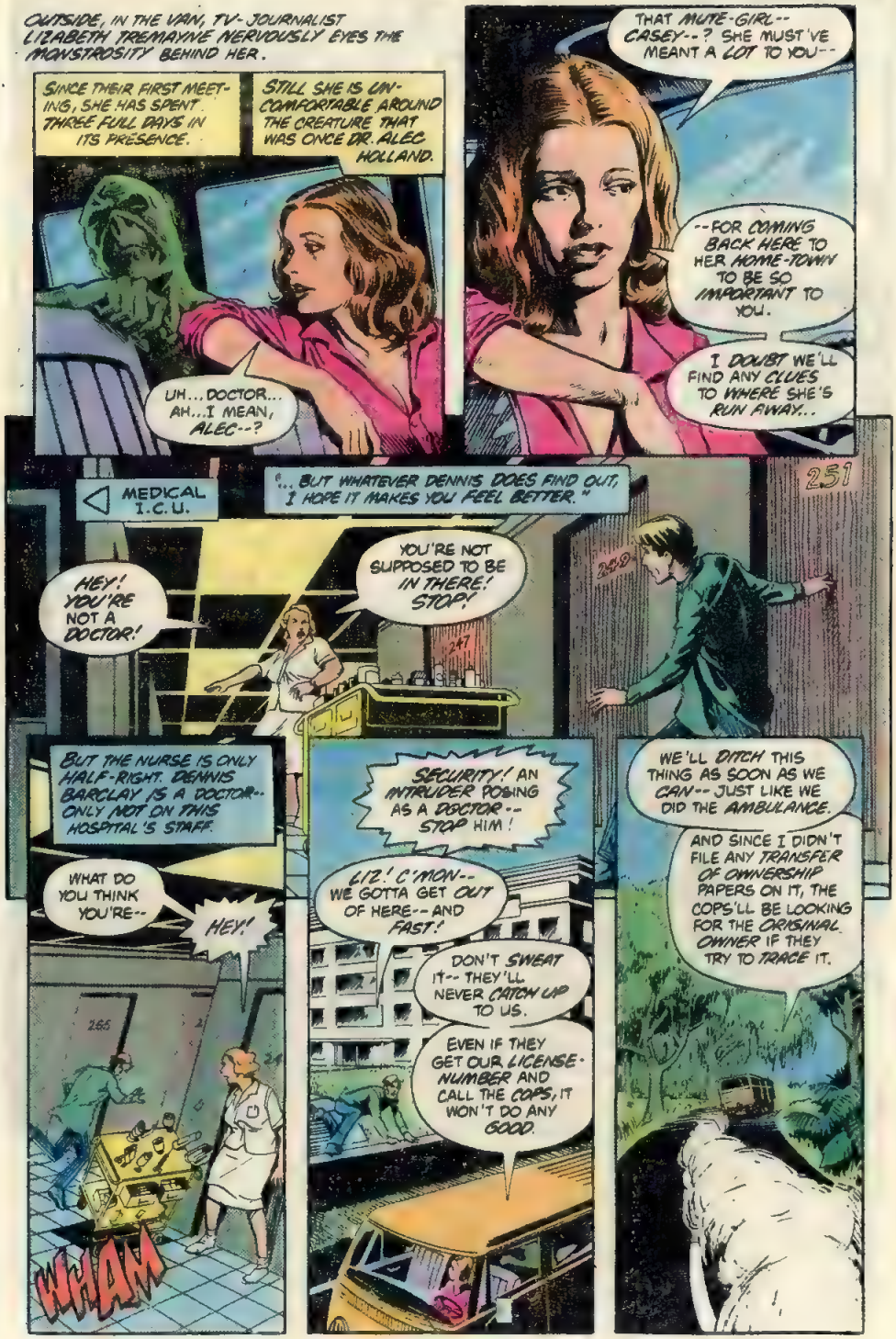
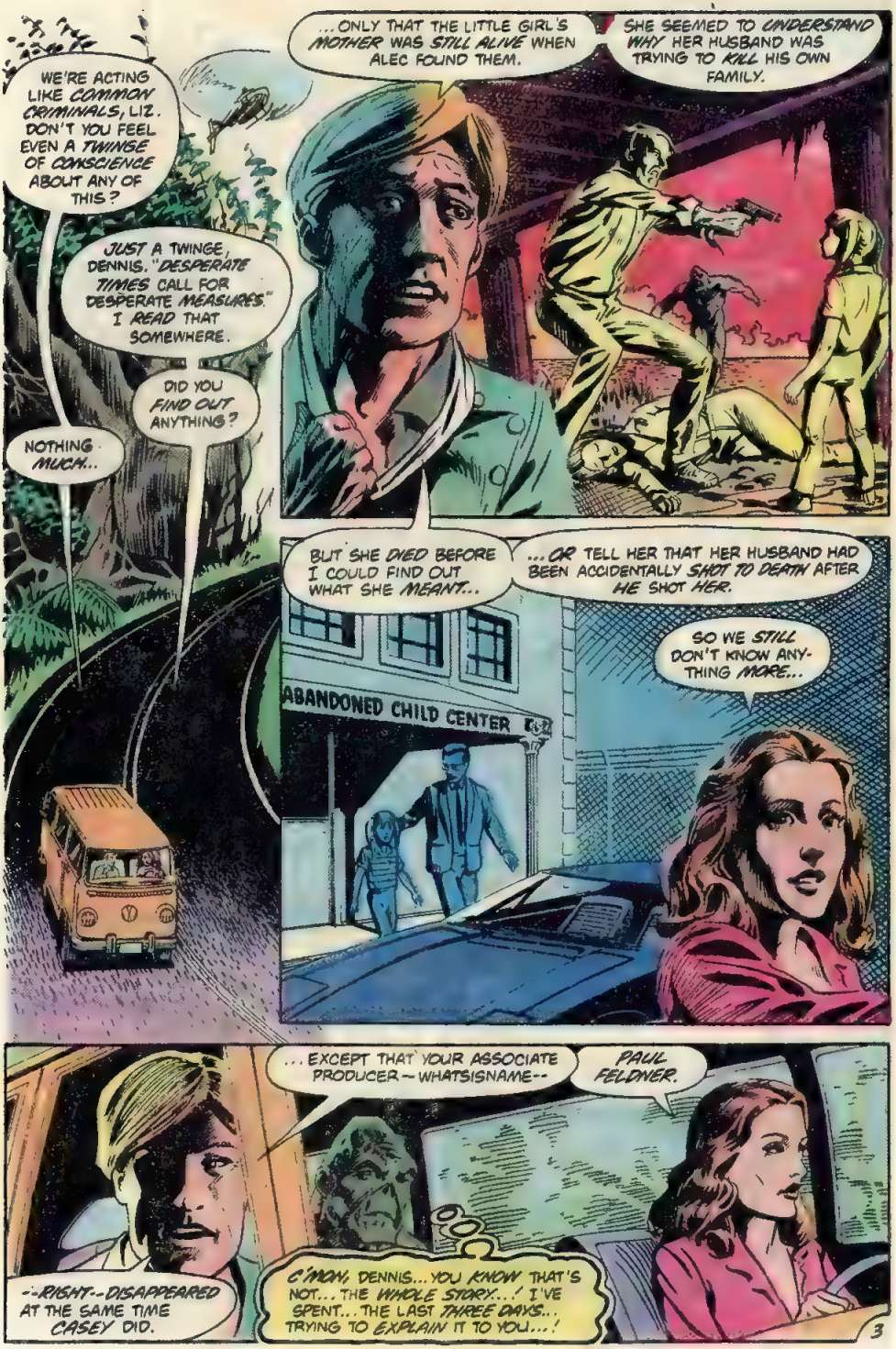
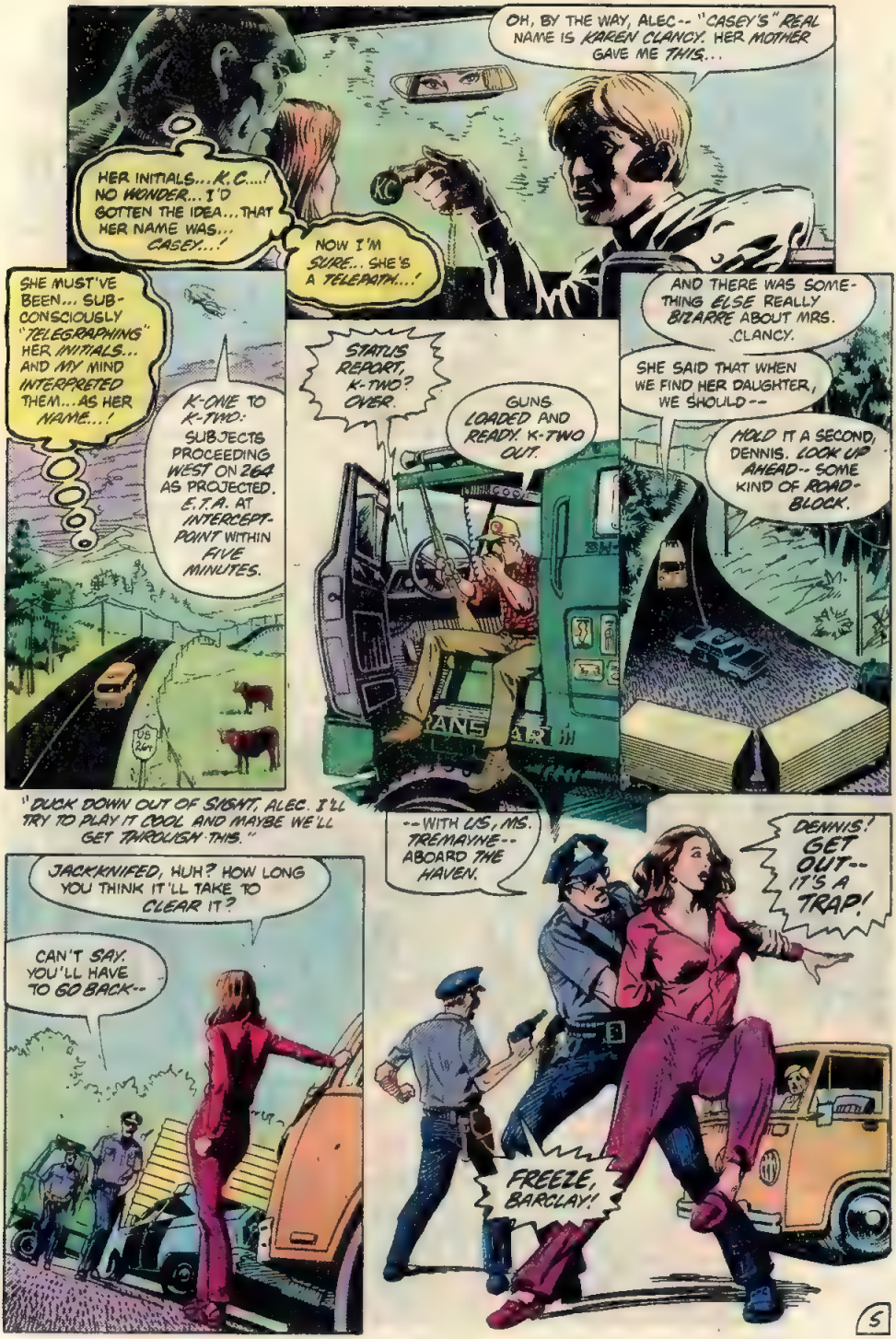
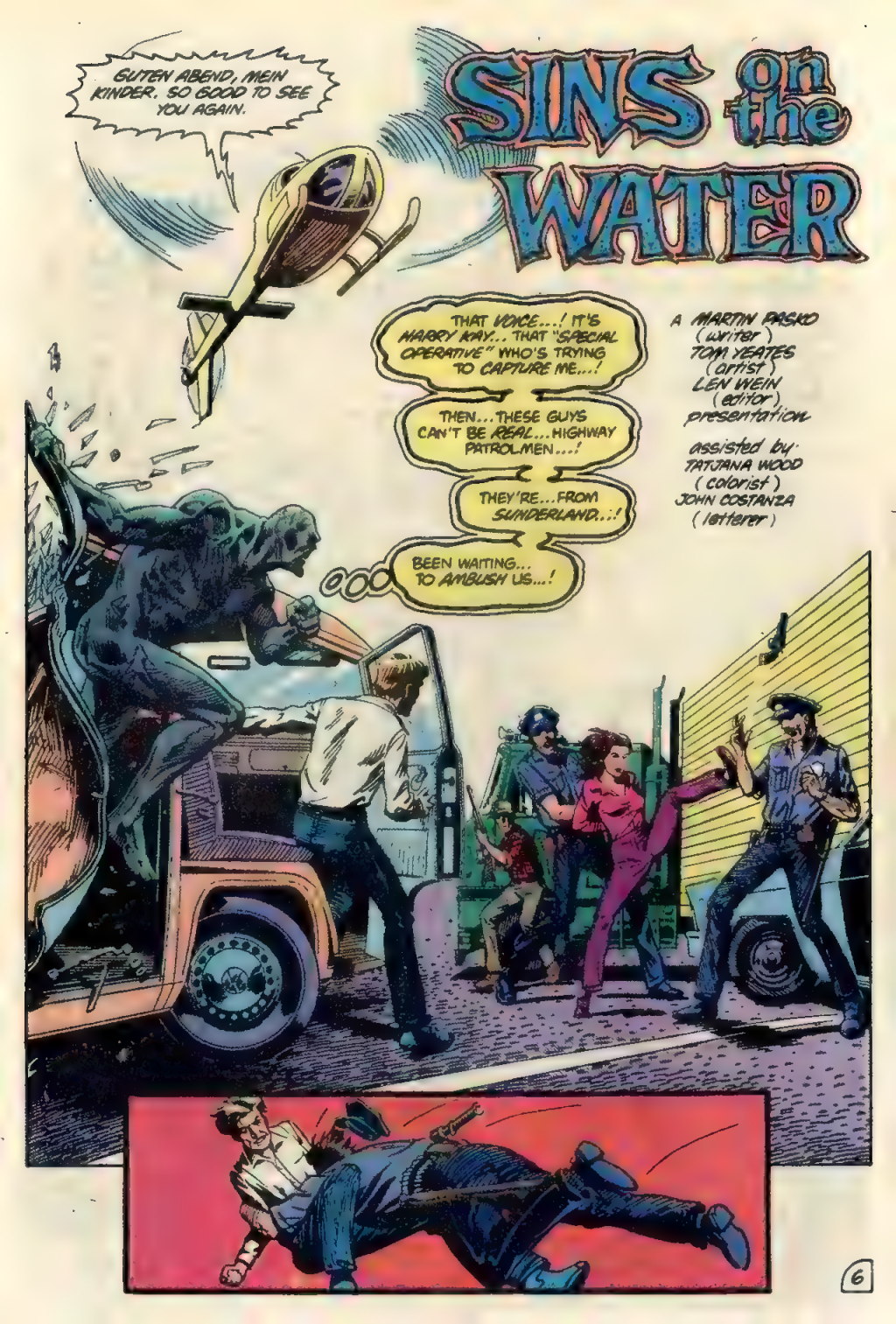

OUTSIDE, IN THE VAN, TV-JOURNALIST LIZABETH TREMAYNE NERVOUSLY EYES THE MONSTROSITY BEHIND HER.
SINCE THEIR FIRST MEETING, SHE HAS SPENT THREE FULL DAYS IN ITS PRESENCE.
STILL SHE IS UNCOMFORTABLE AROUND THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND.
UH... DOCTOR... AH... I MEAN, ALEC--?
THAT MUTE-GIRL-- CASEY--? SHE MUST'VE MEANT A LOT TO YOU--
--FOR COMING BACK HERE TO HER HOME-TOWN TO BE SO IMPORTANT TO YOU.
I DOUBT WE'LL FIND ANY CLUES TO WHERE SHE'S RUN AWAY...
MEDICAL I.C.U.
"... BUT WHATEVER DENNIS DOES FIND OUT, I HOPE IT MAKES YOU FEEL BETTER."
251
HEY! YOU'RE NOT A DOCTOR!
YOU'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE IN THERE! STOP!
BUT THE NURSE IS ONLY HALF-RIGHT. DENNIS BARCLAY IS A DOCTOR-- ONLY NOT ON THIS HOSPITAL'S STAFF.
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE--
HEY!
WHAM
SECURITY! AN INTRUDER POSING AS A DOCTOR-- STOP HIM!
LIZ! C'MON-- WE GOTTA GET OUT OF HERE-- AND FAST!
DON'T SWEAT IT-- THEY'LL NEVER CATCH UP TO US.
EVEN IF THEY GET OUR LICENSE-NUMBER AND CALL THE COPS, IT WON'T DO ANY GOOD.
WE'LL DITCH THIS THING AS SOON AS WE CAN-- JUST LIKE WE DID THE AMBULANCE.
AND SINCE I DIDN'T FILE ANY TRANSFER OF OWNERSHIP PAPERS ON IT, THE COPS'LL BE LOOKING FOR THE ORIGINAL OWNER IF THEY TRY TO TRACE IT.

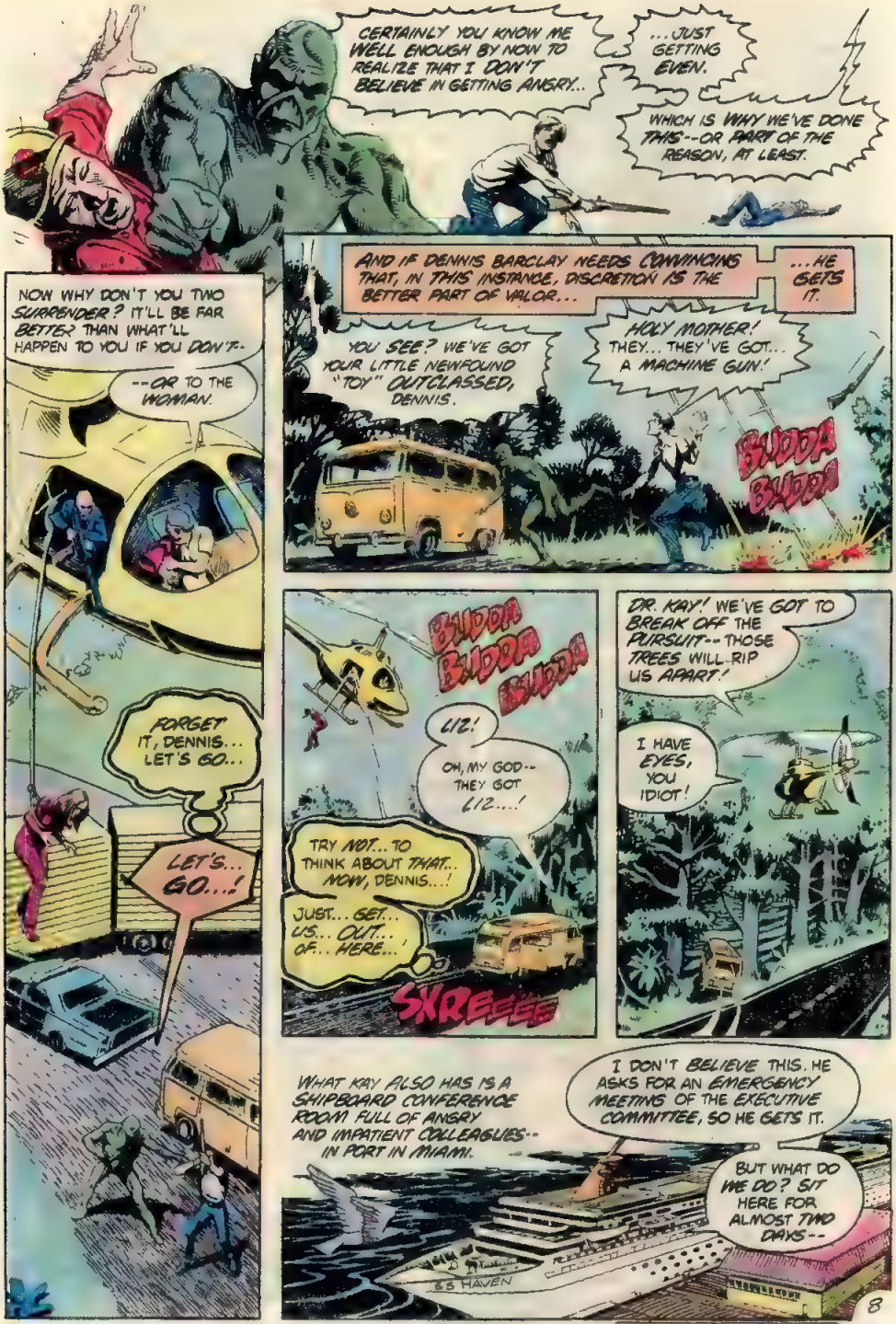

WE'RE ACTING LIKE COMMON CRIMINALS, LIZ. DON'T YOU FEEL EVEN A TWINGE OF CONSCIENCE ABOUT ANY OF THIS?
JUST A TWINGE, DENNIS. "DESPERATE TIMES CALL FOR DESPERATE MEASURES." I READ THAT SOMEWHERE.
DID YOU FIND OUT ANYTHING?
NOTHING MUCH...
...ONLY THAT THE LITTLE GIRL'S MOTHER WAS STILL ALIVE WHEN ALEC FOUND THEM.
SHE SEEMED TO UNDERSTAND WHY HER HUSBAND WAS TRYING TO KILL HIS OWN FAMILY.
BUT SHE DIED BEFORE I COULD FIND OUT WHAT SHE MEANT...
...OR TELL HER THAT HER HUSBAND HAD BEEN ACCIDENTALLY SHOT TO DEATH AFTER HE SHOT HER.
SO WE STILL DON'T KNOW ANYTHING MORE...
ABANDONED CHILD CENTER
...EXCEPT THAT YOUR ASSOCIATE PRODUCER—WHATSISNAME—
PAUL FELDNER.
--RIGHT--DISAPPEARED AT THE SAME TIME CASEY DID.
C'MON, DENNIS... YOU KNOW THAT'S NOT... THE WHOLE STORY...! I'VE SPENT... THE LAST THREE DAYS... TRYING TO EXPLAIN IT TO YOU...!

FELDNER HAD BEEN POSSESSED... BY A DEMONIC ENTITY... AND WAS ABOUT TO KILL CASEY...!
I... STOPPED HIM... AND BANISHED THE DEMON FROM FELDNER'S BODY... BUT GOT WOUNDED IN THE PROCESS... THEN BLACKED OUT...! *
* AS SHOWN IN SOTST #4--LEN
IF I'M READING THAT EXPRESSION RIGHT, ALEC--SORRY, BUT NO, I STILL DON'T BELIEVE YOUR STORY.
BUT I DON'T CARE HOW YOU GOT INJURED. ALL THAT MATTERS IS THAT LIZ SENT YOU TO "MY" CLINIC FOR TREATMENT...
...BECAUSE IF YOU TWO HADN'T COME THERE, WE'D NEVER HAVE FOUND OUT IT WAS A FRONT FOR SOME OF THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION'S COVERT ACTIVITIES.
AND I'D STILL BE UNDER HARRY KAY'S THUMB.
WELL, HOORAY FOR US. NOW SUNDERLAND'S AFTER ALL OF US...
...AND I STILL DON'T KNOW WHERE PAUL IS.
I'VE PLACED A DOZEN CALLS SO FAR--AND NEAR AS I CAN TELL, PAUL DIDN'T RETURN TO LOS ANGELES.
4

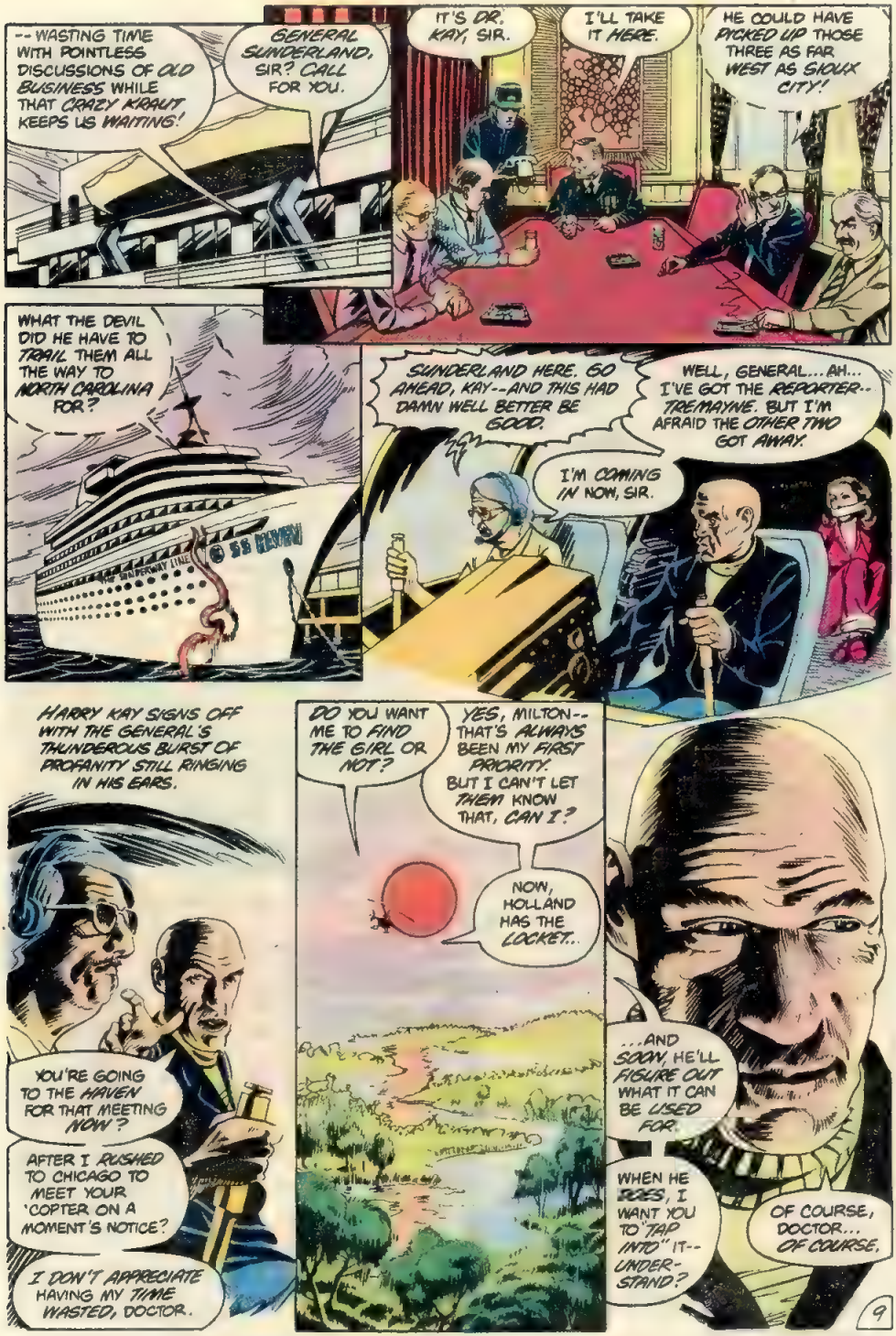

OH, BY THE WAY, ALEC-- "CASEY'S" REAL NAME IS KAREN CLANCY. HER MOTHER GAVE ME THIS...
KC
HER INITIALS... K.C....! NO WONDER... I'D GOTTEN THE IDEA... THAT HER NAME WAS... CASEY...!
NOW I'M SURE... SHE'S A TELEPATH....!
SHE MUST'VE BEEN... SUB-CONSCIOUSLY "TELEGRAPHING" HER INITIALS... AND MY MIND INTERPRETED THEM... AS HER NAME...!
K-ONE TO K-TWO: SUBJECTS PROCEEDING WEST ON 264 AS PROJECTED. E.T.A. AT INTERCEPT-POINT WITHIN FIVE MINUTES.
STATUS REPORT, K-TWO? OVER.
GUNS LOADED AND READY. K-TWO OUT.
AND THERE WAS SOMETHING ELSE REALLY BIZARRE ABOUT MRS. CLANCY.
SHE SAID THAT WHEN WE FIND HER DAUGHTER, WE SHOULD--
HOLD IT A SECOND, DENNIS. LOOK UP AHEAD-- SOME KIND OF ROAD-BLOCK.
"I DUCK DOWN OUT OF SIGHT, ALEC. I'LL TRY TO PLAY IT COOL AND MAYBE WE'LL GET THROUGH THIS."
--WITH LAS, MS. TREMAYNE-- ABOARD THE HAVEN.
DENNIS! GET OUT-- IT'S A TRAP!
FREEZE, BARCLAY!
JACKKNIFED, HUH? HOW LONG YOU THINK IT'LL TAKE TO CLEAR IT?
CAN'T SAY. YOU'LL HAVE TO GO BACK--


GUTEN ABEND, MEIN KINDER. SO GOOD TO SEE YOU AGAIN.
SINS on the WATER
THAT VOICE...! IT'S HARRY KAY... THAT "SPECIAL OPERATIVE" WHO'S TRYING TO CAPTURE ME...!
THEN...THESE GUYS CAN'T BE REAL...HIGHWAY PATROLMEN...!
THEY'RE...FROM SUNDERLAND...!
BEEN WAITING... TO AMBUSH US...!
A MARTIN PASKO (writer) TOM YEATES (artist) LEN WEIN (editor) presentation
assisted by: TATJANA WOOD (colorist) JOHN COSTANZA (letterer)

RAPIDLY, HOLLAND MOVES TO AVERT HIS FRIENDS' CAPTURE.
AND EVEN THOUGH THE SUNDERLAND MEN ARE PREPARED FOR THE MAN-BRUTE, THEY ARE SURPRISED BY HIS AMAZING STRENGTH.
MS. TREMAYNE... DR. HOLLAND... DENNIS! I TRUST YOU AREN'T SURPRISED TO "SEE" ME...?
I'D BE VERY DISAPPOINTED IN YOU IF YOU WERE.
SURELY, YOU DIDN'T THINK THAT AFTER STEALING AN AMBULANCE FROM US...
ALEC! LOOK OUT-- BEHIND YOU!
...UNCOVERING HIGHLY CLASSIFIED DATA... AND VIRTUALLY LEAVING ME FOR DEAD...
THAT RIFLE... FIRING A DART...
...PROBABLY TIPPED WITH A TRANQUILIZER...!
FOONT
...THAT WE'D SIMPLY LET YOU DISAPPEAR, DID YOU?
ESPECIALLY NOT YOU, MS. TREMAYNE! A REPORTER? BE REASONABLE.
AND YOU, DENNIS... THE WAY YOU BETRAYED ME-- AFTER ALL I'VE DONE FOR YOU!


CERTAINLY YOU KNOW ME WELL ENOUGH BY NOW TO REALIZE THAT I DON'T BELIEVE IN GETTING ANGRY...
...JUST GETTING EVEN.
WHICH IS WHY WE'VE DONE THIS--OR PART OF THE REASON, AT LEAST.
AND IF DENNIS BARCLAY NEEDS CONVINCING THAT, IN THIS INSTANCE, DISCRETION IS THE BETTER PART OF VALOR...
...HE GETS IT.
YOU SEE? WE'VE GOT YOUR LITTLE NEWFOUND "TOY" OUTCLASSED, DENNIS.
HOLY MOTHER! THEY... THEY'VE GOT... A MACHINE GUN!
BUDDA BUDDA
NOW WHY DON'T YOU TWO SURRENDER? IT'LL BE FAR BETTER THAN WHAT'LL HAPPEN TO YOU IF YOU DON'T--
--OR TO THE WOMAN.
FORGET IT, DENNIS... LET'S GO...
LET'S... GO...!
BUDDA BUDDA BUDDA
LIZ!
OH, MY GOD-- THEY GOT LIZ...!
TRY NOT... TO THINK ABOUT THAT... NOW, DENNIS...!
JUST... GET... US... OUT... OF... HERE...!
SKREEEE
DR. KAY! WE'VE GOT TO BREAK OFF THE PURSUIT--THOSE TREES WILL RIP US APART!
I HAVE EYES, YOU IDIOT!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS. HE ASKS FOR AN EMERGENCY MEETING OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE, SO HE GETS IT.
WHAT KAY ALSO HAS IS A SHIPBOARD CONFERENCE ROOM FULL OF ANGRY AND IMPATIENT COLLEAGUES-- IN PORT IN MIAMI.
BUT WHAT DO WE DO? SIT HERE FOR ALMOST TWO DAYS--
65 HAVEN

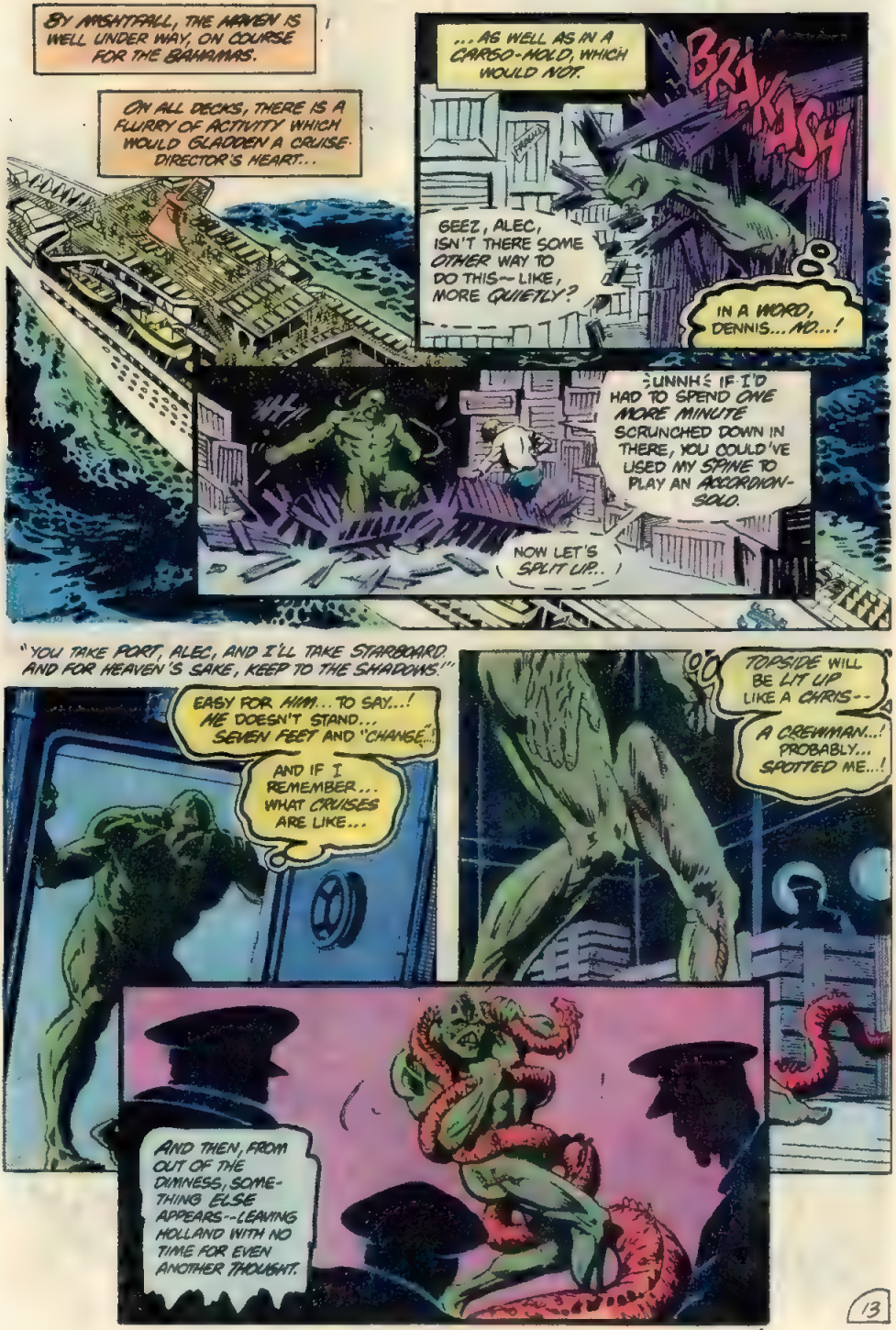
...CONTINUED ON 2ST PAGE FOLLOWING!


-- WASTING TIME WITH POINTLESS DISCUSSIONS OF OLD BUSINESS WHILE THAT CRAZY KRAUT KEEPS US WAITING!
GENERAL SUNDERLAND, SIR? CALL FOR YOU.
IT'S DR. KAY, SIR.
I'LL TAKE IT HERE.
HE COULD HAVE PICKED UP THOSE THREE AS FAR WEST AS SIOUX CITY!
WHAT THE DEVIL DID HE HAVE TO TRAIL THEM ALL THE WAY TO NORTH CAROLINA FOR?
SS HAVEN
SUNDERLAND HERE. GO AHEAD, KAY--AND THIS HAD DAMN WELL BETTER BE GOOD.
WELL, GENERAL... AH... I'VE GOT THE REPORTER-- TREMAYNE. BUT I'M AFRAID THE OTHER TWO GOT AWAY.
I'M COMING IN NOW, SIR.
HARRY KAY SIGNS OFF WITH THE GENERAL'S THUNDEROUS BURST OF PROFANITY STILL RINGING IN HIS EARS.
YOU'RE GOING TO THE HAVEN FOR THAT MEETING NOW?
AFTER I RUSHED TO CHICAGO TO MEET YOUR 'COPTER ON A MOMENT'S NOTICE?
I DON'T APPRECIATE HAVING MY TIME WASTED, DOCTOR.
DO YOU WANT ME TO FIND THE GIRL OR NOT?
YES, MILTON-- THAT'S ALWAYS BEEN MY FIRST PRIORITY. BUT I CAN'T LET THEM KNOW THAT, CAN I?
NOW, HOLLAND HAS THE LOCKET..
...AND SOON, HE'LL FIGURE OUT WHAT IT CAN BE USED FOR.
WHEN HE DOES, I WANT YOU TO "TAP INTO" IT-- UNDERSTAND?
OF COURSE, DOCTOR... OF COURSE.

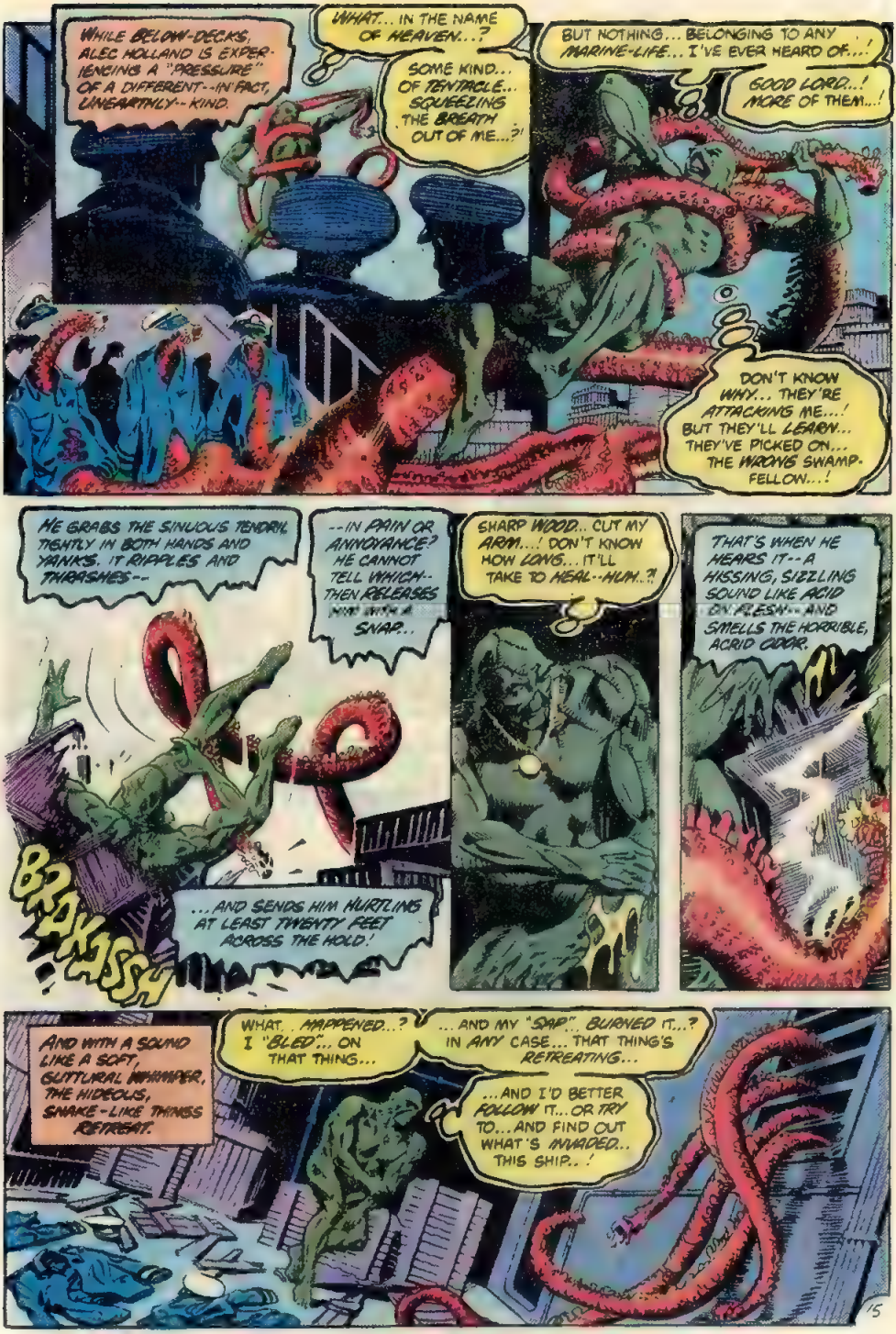
HE'LL BE ABOARD JUST BEFORE DEPARTURE-TIME, SO IT SEEMS YOU GENTLEMEN WILL HAVE TO CANCEL YOUR APPOINTMENTS FOR THE NEXT WEEK.
LOOKS LIKE WE'RE ALL GOING ON A CARIBBEAN CRUISE.
NOT THAT I'LL MIND, OF COURSE... SINCE I'LL BE HAVING MISS TREMAYNE'S ...AH... COMPANY...
WE'RE ALL READY FOR BOARDING UP HERE, SAM. WHY DON'T YOU TAKE A BREAK NOW--
--MAYBE GET TO KNOW THE NEW KID?
SURE THING, PHIL.
YOU'RE THE NEW YEOMAN PURSER, AREN'TCHA, KID? HALLORAN, ISN'T IT?
RIGHT. TIM HALLORAN.
YEAH... BUT THAT'S NOT THE PROBLEM. IT'S OUR ROUTE.
DON'T BELIEVE EVERYTHING YOU READ IN THE PAPERS, KID.
ACCORDING TO THE CHART, WE'RE GOING RIGHT THROUGH THE AREA WHERE THAT SUNDERLAND FREIGHTER HAD THAT ACCIDENT SIX YEARS AGO.
YOU SEEM NERVOUS. WHATSA MATTER, TIM-- THIS YOUR FIRST TIME OUT?
BUT HOW DO WE KNOW THOSE STORIES WEREN'T TRUE?
HOW DO WE KNOW SHE WASN'T CARRYING A SHIPMENT OF SOME SECRET LABORATORY-BRED VIRUS WHEN SHE SANK--
EEEYAAH
IT TAKES THEM LESS THAN A MINUTE TO LOCATE THE SOURCE OF THE SCREAM:
IT'S PHIL!
THERE'S NO PULSE-- I THINK HE'S DEAD!
WHAT... WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM?
I DUNNO. I AIN'T NEVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE THAT BEFORE.
HAIL SICK-BAY-- TELL THE DOC ABOUT THIS. HURRY!
WE GOTTA GET THE BODY OUTTA HERE BEFORE THE PASSENGERS BOARD!

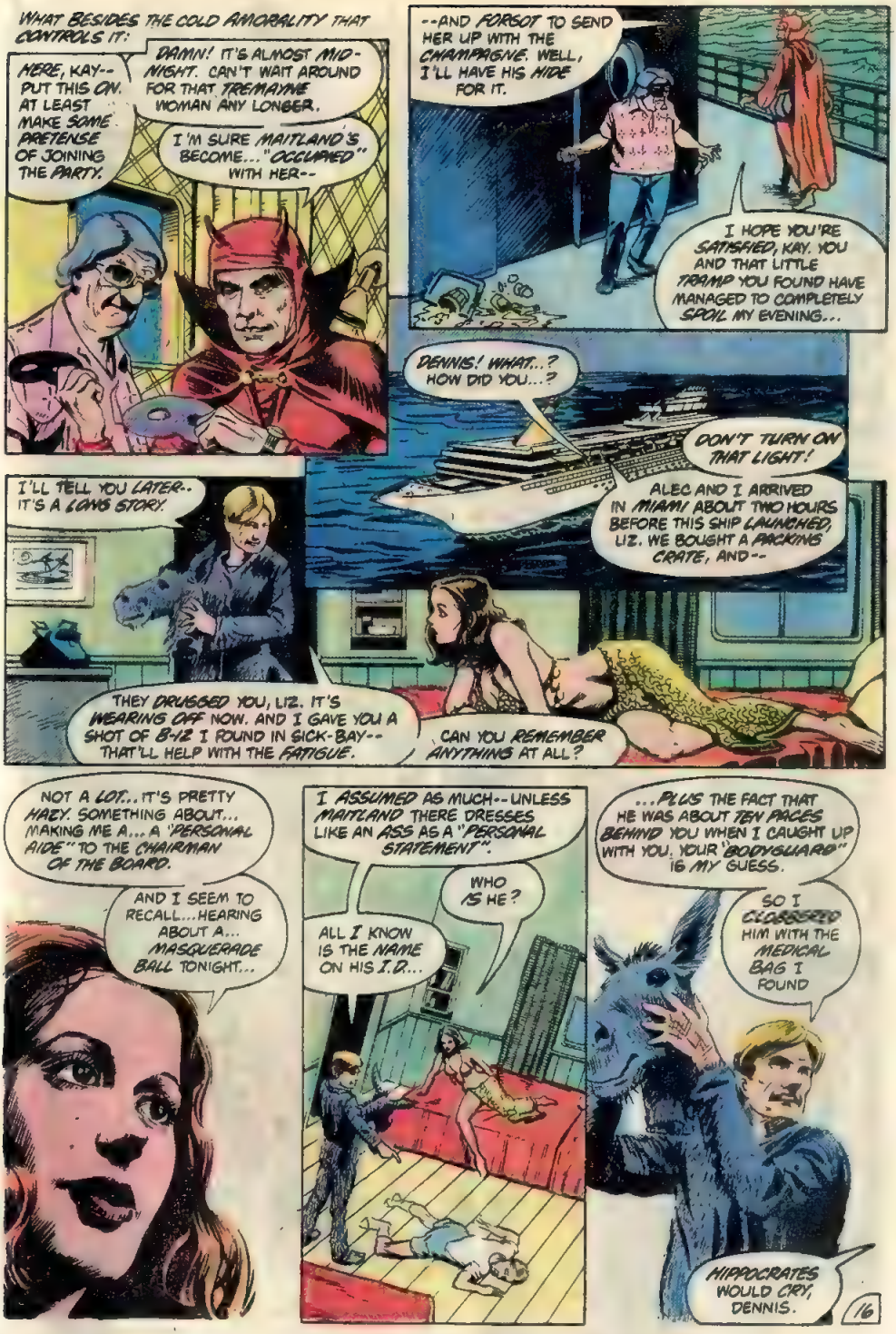
THERE WILL BE MORE THAN TIME ENOUGH FOR THAT. THE HAVEN'S DEPARTURE-TIME IS STILL HOURS AWAY.
A FACT NOW UNDER DISCUSSION SOMEWHERE IN THE EVERGLADES, ROUGHLY 50 MILES TO THE NORTH.
IT'S FUNNY, ALEC...
...TILL NOW, I WAS THE ONLY ONE OF US WHO WASN'T LOOKING FOR SOMEBODY.
YOU WANT TO FIND CASEY, AND LIZ WANTS TO FIND PAUL.
ME, I JUST WANTED TO FIND A PLACE TO HIDE FROM HARRY.
NOW... I'M JUST AS DETERMINED TO FIND LIZ. IN JUST THE FEW DAYS WE'VE BEEN TRAVELING TOGETHER, I'VE GROWN VERY... FOND OF HER.
SO I DON'T WANT TO HEAR ANY MORE PROTESTS. WE'RE GOING AFTER HER NOW--
--AND I WON'T TAKE "NO" FOR AN ANSWER.
SO IF YOU WANT MY HELP IN FINDING OUT WHAT'S KILLING YOU--*
RELAX, DENNIS...! I WANT... TO GET LIZ AWAY FROM THOSE CREEPS... AS MUCH AS YOU DO...!
* HOLLAND IS SLOWLY DYING FROM AN AS-YET-UNKNOWN AILMENT. --LEN.
REMEMBER THAT NAME THEY MENTIONED-- "HAVEN"? IT'S A SHIP.
NO PROBLEM...! AND YET... CASEY'S SO CLOSE..! I CAN FEEL IT....
HAVEN
I PICKED UP THIS CRUISE-SCHEDULE IN PALM BEACH THIS MORNING...
...AND THERE'S STILL TIME TO STOW AWAY ON BOARD HER BEFORE SHE LIFTS ANCHOR!
SOMEHOW... I CAN SENSE THAT... EVERY TIME I TOUCH THE LOCKET...!
IT'S AS IF... IT GIVES ME PSYCHOMETRIC POWERS*...!
* PSYCHOMETRY: THE ABILITY TO MENTALLY PINPOINT A PERSON'S LOCATION FROM HANDLING AN OBJECT ONCE OWNED BY THAT PERSON. --LEN.

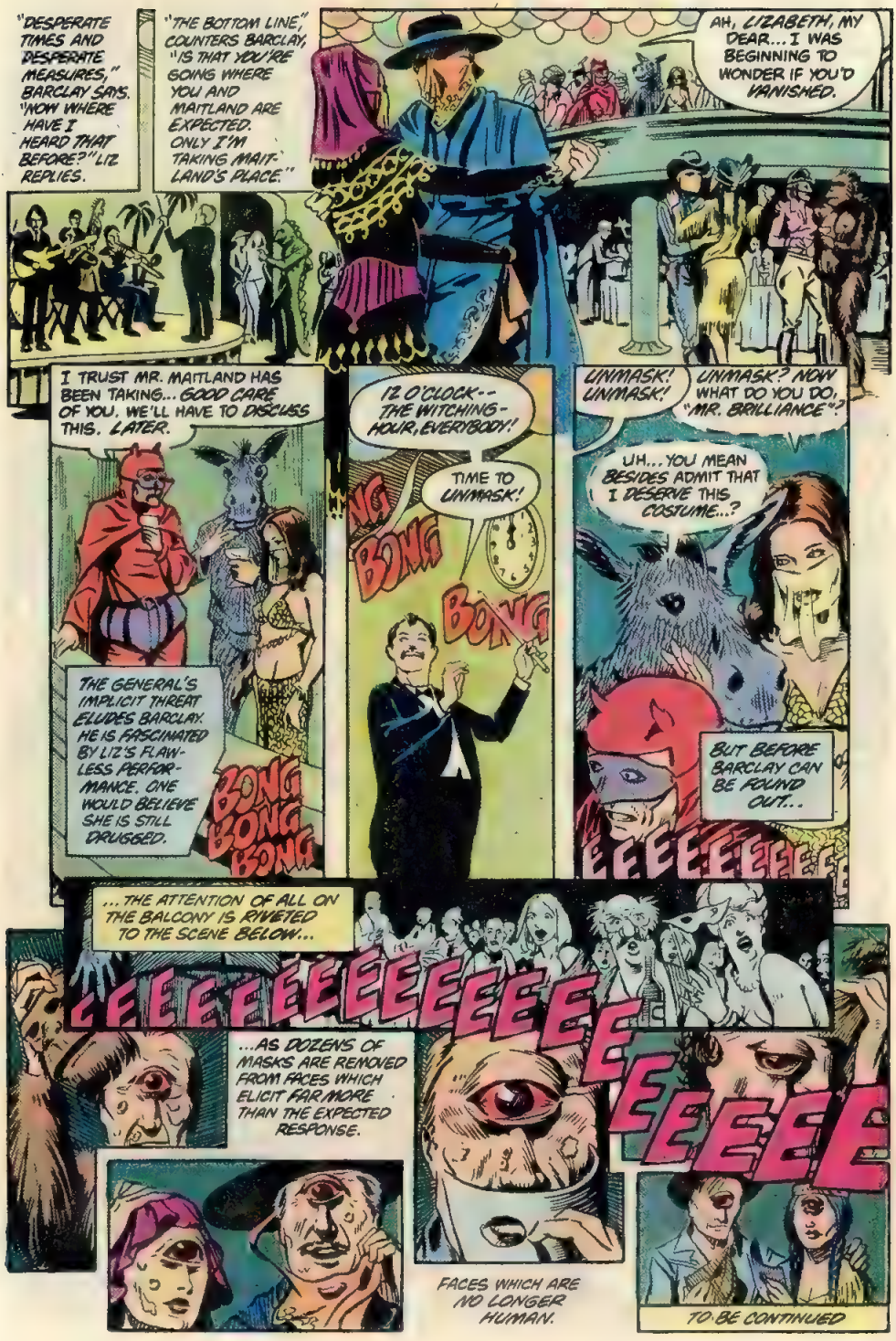
SHE'S WITH FELDNER...! I KNOW THAT... SOMEHOW...!
AND... SHE TOOK HIM TO WHEREVER IT IS... THEY'VE GONE...!
THERE'S... SOME SORT OF...
...CONNECTION BETWEEN THE TWO OF THEM--SOMETHING SHE WANTS FROM HIM.
I'M GETTING A VERY STRONG IMPRESSION FROM THE LOCKET NOW.
SHE'S WITHIN 100 FEET OF US, GENTLEMEN...
...IN A CAVE NEAR THE TOP OF THE CANYON
GET HER.
IT TAKES THE TWO HIT-MEN SOME TWENTY MINUTES TO REACH THE RIM OF PROVIDENCE CANYONS.
THE GREETINGS THEY FIND THERE TAKES THEM BY SURPRISE.
HELP! HELP ME! I DON'T KNOW WHO YOU ARE, OR WHY YOU'RE HERE-- BUT TAKE ME BACK WITH YOU-- PLEASE!
YOU GOTTA GET ME OUTTA HERE!
SHE'S CRAZY! SHE'S GONNA KILL ME-- I SWEAR! IF YOU LEAVE ME HERE ALONE WITH HER, I'LL DIE--
--I'LL DIE!
FROM OUT OF THE BLACKNESS, THE GIRL SILENTLY ADVANCES. HER BRITTLE GAZE PULSING WITH A COLD FIRE FEW MEN SAVE ALEC HOLLAND HAVE EVER SEEN...
...AND EXUDING A FORCE NO MEN SAVE PAUL FELDNER AND HARRY KAY HAVE EVER FELT...
...TILL NOW.
YAAAHH


BY NIGHTFALL, THE HAVEN IS WELL UNDER WAY, ON COURSE FOR THE BAHAMAS.
ON ALL DECKS, THERE IS A FLURRY OF ACTIVITY WHICH WOULD GLADDEN A CRUISE DIRECTOR'S HEART...
...AS WELL AS IN A CARGO-HOLD, WHICH WOULD NOT.
BRAKKASH
GEEZ, ALEC, ISN'T THERE SOME OTHER WAY TO DO THIS--LIKE, MORE QUIETLY?
IN A WORD, DENNIS... NO...!
UNNH! IF I'D HAD TO SPEND ONE MORE MINUTE SCRUNCHED DOWN IN THERE, YOU COULD'VE USED MY SPINE TO PLAY AN ACCORDION-SOLO.
NOW LET'S SPLIT UP..
"YOU TAKE PORT, ALEC, AND I'LL TAKE STARBOARD. AND FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE, KEEP TO THE SHADOWS."
EASY FOR HIM... TO SAY...! ME DOESN'T STAND... SEVEN FEET AND "CHANGE"!
AND IF I REMEMBER... WHAT CRUISES ARE LIKE...
TOPSIDE WILL BE LIT UP LIKE A CHRIS--
A CREWMAN...! PROBABLY... SPOTTED ME...!
AND THEN, FROM OUT OF THE DIMNESS, SOMETHING ELSE APPEARS--LEAVING HOLLAND WITH NO TIME FOR EVEN ANOTHER THOUGHT.

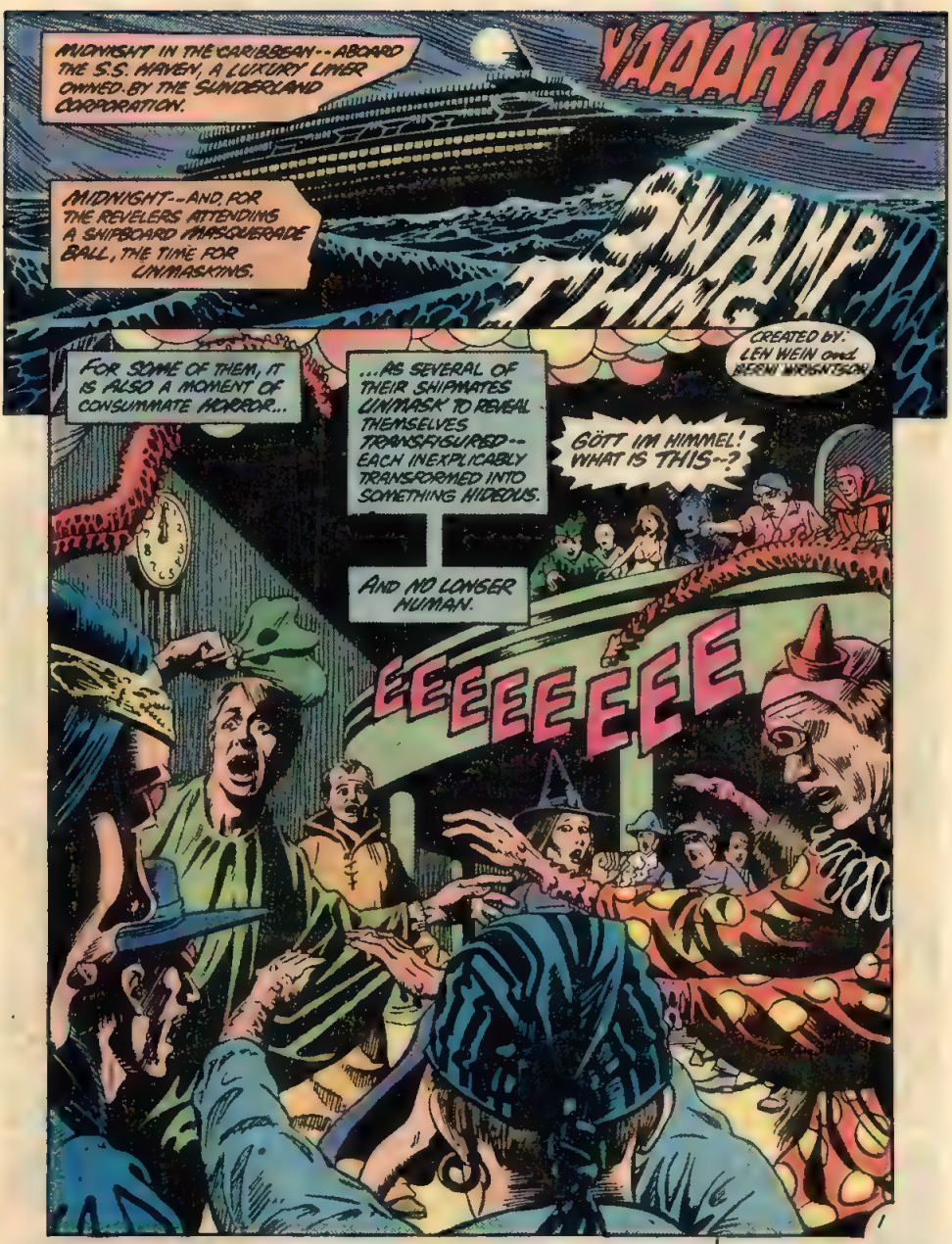
BUT HERR GENERAL, I DISTINCTLY REQUESTED AN EMERGENCY MEETING--
AND YOU'LL HAVE IT, YOU NAZI IMBECILE-- TOMORROW-- AFTER THE FESTIVITIES!
IT CANNOT WAIT--
BUT IT ALREADY HAS WAITED-- THREE DAYS--FOR YOU.
YOU'LL HAVE TO LEAVE NOW, DOCTOR. I'M EXPECTING A VISIT.. FROM THE TREMAYNE WOMAN.
I BROUGHT HER ABOARD TO BE TAKEN INTO CUSTODY, GENERAL-- NOT TO BE ADDED TO YOUR STABLE OF PRIVATE--
YOU SHUT YOUR FILTHY MOUTH, YOU HEINIE SCUM, BEFORE I SHUT IT FOR YOU!
LIZ--? LIZ, IT'S ME-- DENNIS.
WHAT IN HELL ARE YOU DOING IN THAT RIDICULOUS GET-UP--?
LIZ, ANSWER ME! I'M TALKING TO--
DRUGGED. SHE'S BEEN DRUGGED.
ALMOST IMMEDIATELY, A NUMBER OF REASONABLE CONCLUSIONS COME TO MIND. ONE: SHE PROBABLY HAS HER OWN STATEROOM. WITH LUCK, SHE'LL HAVE THE KEY TO IT--
--AND NOT HER PERSONAL "BODYGUARD" WHO IS NO DOUBT SKULKING ABOUT SOMEWHERE RIGHT NOW.
TWO: WITH MORE LUCK, THEY'LL BE ABLE TO HIDE THERE. IN ANY EVENT, HE'LL HAVE TO KNOCK HER OUT FIRST--
--WHICH HE DOES WITH A SLIGHT PRESSURE ON HER CAROTID ARTERY.


WHILE BELOW-DECKS, ALEC HOLLAND IS EXPERIENCING A "PRESSURE" OF A DIFFERENT--IN FACT, UNEARTHLY--KIND.
WHAT... IN THE NAME OF HEAVEN...?
SOME KIND... OF TENTACLE... SQUEEZING THE BREATH OUT OF ME...?!
BUT NOTHING... BELONGING TO ANY MARINE-LIFE... I'VE EVER HEARD OF...!
GOOD LORD..! MORE OF THEM...!
DON'T KNOW WHY... THEY'RE ATTACKING ME...! BUT THEY'LL LEARN... THEY'VE PICKED ON... THE WRONG SWAMP-FELLOW...!
HE GRABS THE SINUOUS TENDRIL TIGHTLY IN BOTH HANDS AND YANKS. IT RIPPLES AND THRASHES--
--IN PAIN OR ANNOYANCE? HE CANNOT TELL WHICH--THEN RELEASES HIM WITH A SNAP...
BRAKKSS
...AND SENDS HIM HURTLING AT LEAST TWENTY FEET ACROSS THE HOLD!
SHARP WOOD.. CUT MY ARM...! DON'T KNOW HOW LONG... IT'LL TAKE TO HEAL--HUM..?!
THAT'S WHEN HE HEARS IT--A HISSING, SIZZLING SOUND LIKE ACID ON FLESH--AND SMELLS THE HORRIBLE, ACRID ODOR.
AND WITH A SOUND LIKE A SOFT, GUTTURAL WHIMPER, THE HIDEOUS, SNAKE-LIKE THINGS RETREAT.
WHAT... HAPPENED...? I "BLED"... ON THAT THING...
...AND MY "SAP"... BURNED IT...? IN ANY CASE... THAT THING'S RETREATING...
...AND I'D BETTER FOLLOW IT... OR TRY TO... AND FIND OUT WHAT'S INVADED... THIS SHIP..!
15


WHAT BESIDES THE COLD AMORALITY THAT CONTROLS IT:
HERE, KAY-- PUT THIS ON. AT LEAST MAKE SOME PRETENSE OF JOINING THE PARTY.
DAMN! IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT. CAN'T WAIT AROUND FOR THAT TREMAYNE WOMAN ANY LONGER.
I'M SURE MAITLAND'S BECOME..."OCCUPIED" WITH HER--
--AND FORSOT TO SEND HER UP WITH THE CHAMPAGNE. WELL, I'LL HAVE HIS HIDE FOR IT.
I HOPE YOU'RE SATISFIED, KAY. YOU AND THAT LITTLE TRAMP YOU FOUND HAVE MANAGED TO COMPLETELY SPOIL MY EVENING...
DENNIS! WHAT...? HOW DID YOU...?
DON'T TURN ON THAT LIGHT!
ALEC AND I ARRIVED IN MIAMI ABOUT TWO HOURS BEFORE THIS SHIP LAUNCHED, LIZ. WE BOUGHT A PACKING CRATE, AND--
I'LL TELL YOU LATER-- IT'S A LONG STORY.
THEY DRUGGED YOU, LIZ. IT'S WEARING OFF NOW. AND I GAVE YOU A SHOT OF B-12 I FOUND IN SICK-BAY-- THAT'LL HELP WITH THE FATIGUE.
CAN YOU REMEMBER ANYTHING AT ALL?
NOT A LOT... IT'S PRETTY HAZY. SOMETHING ABOUT... MAKING ME A... A "PERSONAL AIDE" TO THE CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD.
AND I SEEM TO RECALL... HEARING ABOUT A... MASQUERADE BALL TONIGHT...
I ASSUMED AS MUCH-- UNLESS MAITLAND THERE DRESSES LIKE AN ASS AS A "PERSONAL STATEMENT".
WHO IS HE?
ALL I KNOW IS THE NAME ON HIS I.D....
...PLUS THE FACT THAT HE WAS ABOUT TEN PACES BEHIND YOU WHEN I CAUGHT UP WITH YOU. YOUR "BODYGUARD" IS MY GUESS.
SO I CLOBBERED HIM WITH THE MEDICAL BAG I FOUND
HIPPOCRATES WOULD CRY, DENNIS.
16


"DESPERATE TIMES AND DESPERATE MEASURES," BARCLAY SAYS. "NOW WHERE HAVE I HEARD THAT BEFORE?" LIZ REPLIES.
"THE BOTTOM LINE," COUNTERS BARCLAY, "IS THAT YOU'RE GOING WHERE YOU AND MAITLAND ARE EXPECTED. ONLY I'M TAKING MAITLAND'S PLACE."
AH, LIZABETH, MY DEAR... I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER IF YOU'D VANISHED.
I TRUST MR. MAITLAND HAS BEEN TAKING... GOOD CARE OF YOU. WE'LL HAVE TO DISCUSS THIS. LATER.
THE GENERAL'S IMPLICIT THREAT ELUDES BARCLAY. HE IS FASCINATED BY LIZ'S FLAWLESS PERFORMANCE. ONE WOULD BELIEVE SHE IS STILL DRUGGED.
BONG BONG BONG
12 O'CLOCK -- THE WITCHING-HOUR, EVERYBODY!
TIME TO UNMASK!
BONG
BONG
UNMASK! UNMASK!
UNMASK? NOW WHAT DO YOU DO, "MR. BRILLIANCE"?
UH... YOU MEAN BESIDES ADMIT THAT I DESERVE THIS COSTUME...?
BUT BEFORE BARCLAY CAN BE FOUND OUT..
EEEEEEEEE
...THE ATTENTION OF ALL ON THE BALCONY IS RIVETED TO THE SCENE BELOW...
EEEEEEEE

The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
60¢
U.K. 20p
CAN. 75¢
NO. 7
NOV.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
T. YEATES
WHERE THE ACTION IS!


MIDNIGHT IN THE CARIBBEAN--ABOARD THE S.S. HAVEN, A LUXURY LINER OWNED BY THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION.
YAAAHHH
MIDNIGHT--AND, FOR THE REVELERS ATTENDING A SHIPBOARD MASQUERADE BALL, THE TIME FOR UNMASKING.
SWAMP THING
CREATED BY: LEN WEIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON
FOR SOME OF THEM, IT IS ALSO A MOMENT OF CONSUMMATE HORROR...
...AS SEVERAL OF THEIR SHIPMATES UNMASK TO REVEAL THEMSELVES TRANSFIXURED--EACH INEXPLICABLY TRANSFORMED INTO SOMETHING HIDEOUS.
GÖTT IM HIMMEL! WHAT IS THIS--?
AND NO LONGER HUMAN.
EEEEEEEEE

THE SAGA OF SWAMP THING, Vol 1, No. 7, November, 1982. Published monthly by DC COMICS INC., 75 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N Y 10019 Copyright © 1982 by DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

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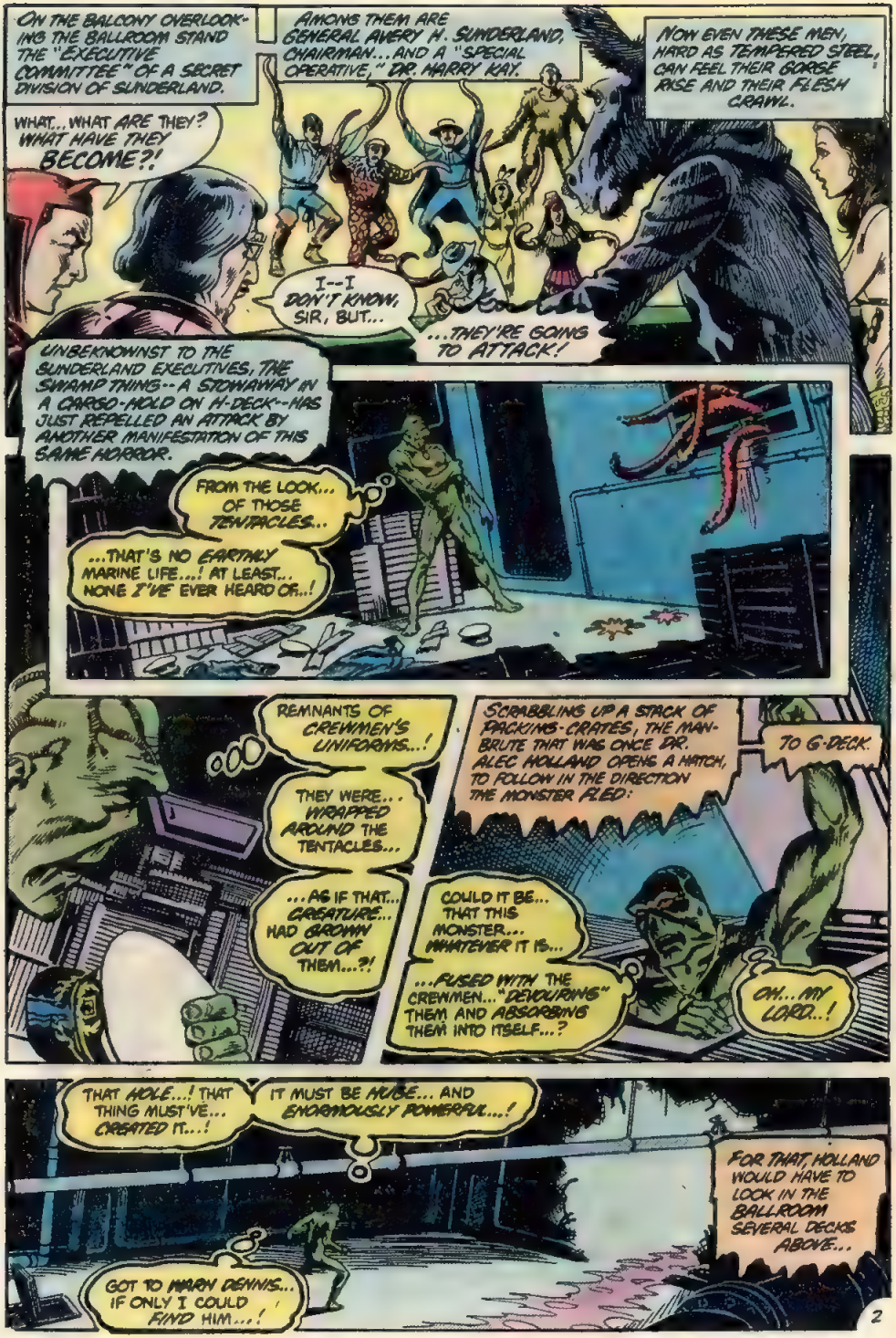
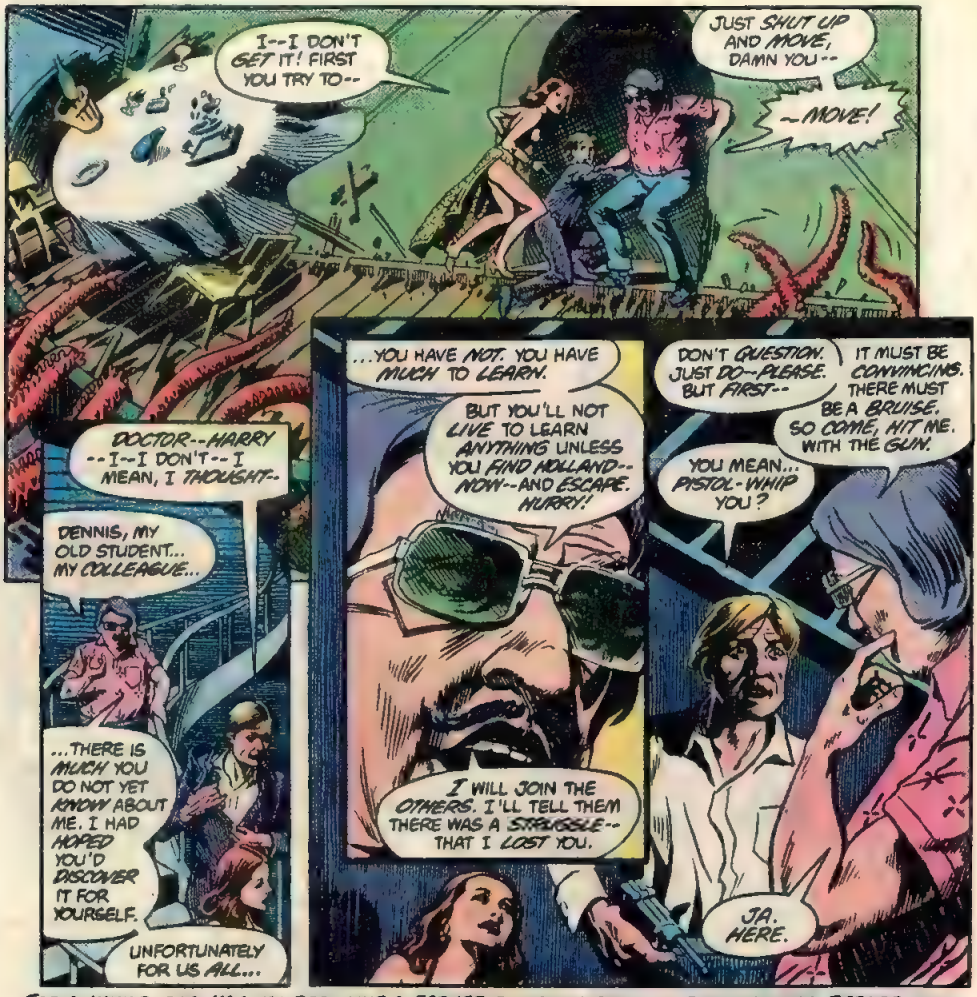

ON THE BALCONY OVERLOOKING THE BALLROOM STAND THE "EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE" OF A SECRET DIVISION OF SUNDERLAND.
AMONG THEM ARE GENERAL AVERY H. SUNDERLAND, CHAIRMAN... AND A "SPECIAL OPERATIVE," DR. HARRY KAY.
NOW EVEN THESE MEN, HARD AS TEMPERED STEEL, CAN FEEL THEIR GORGE RISE AND THEIR FLESH CRAWL.
WHAT... WHAT ARE THEY? WHAT HAVE THEY BECOME?!
I--I DON'T KNOW, SIR, BUT...
...THEY'RE GOING TO ATTACK!
UNBEKNOWNST TO THE SUNDERLAND EXECUTIVES, THE SWAMP THING--A STOWAWAY IN A CARGO-HOLD ON H-DECK--HAS JUST REPELLED AN ATTACK BY ANOTHER MANIFESTATION OF THIS SAME HORROR.
FROM THE LOOK... OF THOSE TENTACLES...
...THAT'S NO EARTHLY MARINE LIFE...! AT LEAST... NONE I'VE EVER HEARD OF...!
REMNANTS OF CREWMEN'S UNIFORMS...!
THEY WERE... WRAPPED AROUND THE TENTACLES...
...AS IF THAT... CREATURE... HAD GROWN OUT OF THEM...?!
SCRABBLING UP A STACK OF PACKING-CRATES, THE MAN-BRUTE THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND OPENS A HATCH, TO FOLLOW IN THE DIRECTION THE MONSTER FLED:
TO G-DECK.
COULD IT BE... THAT THIS MONSTER... WHATEVER IT IS...
...FUSED WITH THE CREWMEN... "DEVOURING" THEM AND ABSORBING THEM INTO ITSELF...?
OH... MY LORD...!
THAT HOLE...! THAT THING MUST'VE... CREATED IT...!
IT MUST BE HUGE... AND ENORMOUSLY POWERFUL...!
FOR THAT, HOLLAND WOULD HAVE TO LOOK IN THE BALLROOM SEVERAL DECKS ABOVE...
GOT TO WARN DENNIS... IF ONLY I COULD FIND HIM...!

...WHERE HIS NEWFOUND ALLY, DR. DENNIS BARCLAY,* POSES AS ONE OF THE "EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE"--COMPLETELY CONCEALED WITHIN AN ABSURD COSTUME.
KAY! MAITLAND! WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU GUYS? MOVE IT!
YOU GO AHEAD--WE'LL CATCH UP.
THE WOMAN NEEDS TO BE SEDATED AGAIN. MAITLAND MUST ASSIST ME.
I MUST CONFESS I UNDERESTIMATED YOU, DENNIS. IMAGINE STOWING AWAY ABOARD A BIG SHIP LIKE THIS.
WITH HOLLAND, TOO, NO DOUBT. CONGRATULATIONS.
YOU KNOW?
GENERAL! THOSE THINGS--THEY'RE TRYING TO GET UP HERE!
OF COURSE. THE REAL MAITLAND'S AN ASTHMATIC--HE WHEEZES CONSTANTLY.
BUT NEVER MIND ALL THAT NOW--NO TIME.
TAKE ONE OF THE MOTORIZED LIFEBOATS AND ESCAPE--QUICKLY!
BUT HERE--YOU MAY NEED THIS BEFORE YOU EVEN MAKE IT TO THE LIFEBOAT.
COME ON--MY PRIVATE HYDROFOIL'S ON G-DECK! WE CAN GET AWAY IN THAT!
AND YOUR PUPILS, MS. TREMAYNE, ARE NO LONGER DILATED.
OBVIOUSLY, YOUR "DRUGGED" CONDITION TONIGHT WAS JUST SO MUCH CLEVER FAKERY.
WHAT?!
* WHOM HE MET IN ISSUE #5--LEN.
3


I--I DON'T GET IT! FIRST YOU TRY TO--
JUST SHUT UP AND MOVE, DAMN YOU--
--MOVE!
DOCTOR--HARRY --I--I DON'T-- I MEAN, I THOUGHT--
DENNIS, MY OLD STUDENT... MY COLLEAGUE...
...THERE IS MUCH YOU DO NOT YET KNOW ABOUT ME. I HAD HOPED YOU'D DISCOVER IT FOR YOURSELF.
UNFORTUNATELY FOR US ALL...
...YOU HAVE NOT. YOU HAVE MUCH TO LEARN.
BUT YOU'LL NOT LIVE TO LEARN ANYTHING UNLESS YOU FIND HOLLAND--NOW--AND ESCAPE. HURRY!
I WILL JOIN THE OTHERS. I'LL TELL THEM THERE WAS A STRUGGLE--THAT I LOST YOU.
DON'T QUESTION. JUST DO--PLEASE. BUT FIRST--
IT MUST BE CONVINCING. THERE MUST BE A BRUISE. SO COME, HIT ME. WITH THE GUN.
YOU MEAN... PISTOL-WHIP YOU?
JA. HERE.

FOR A WHILE, THIS KAY HAD BEEN LIKE A FATHER TO DENNIS BARCLAY. BUT THAT WAS BEFORE DENNIS LEARNED THE EXACT NATURE OF HIS TIES TO SLUNDERLAND.

AT FIRST, DENNIS IS TORN BY WHAT KAY ASKS OF HIM. BUT THEN DENNIS RECALLS ALL THAT HE NOW KNOWS--AND SUDDENLY...

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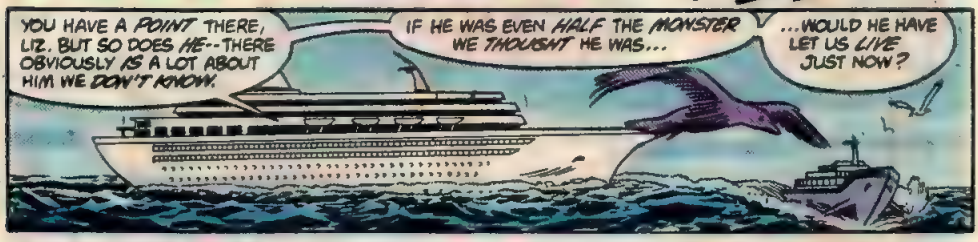
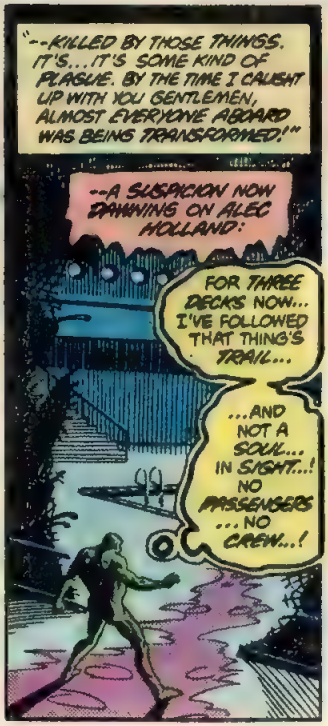
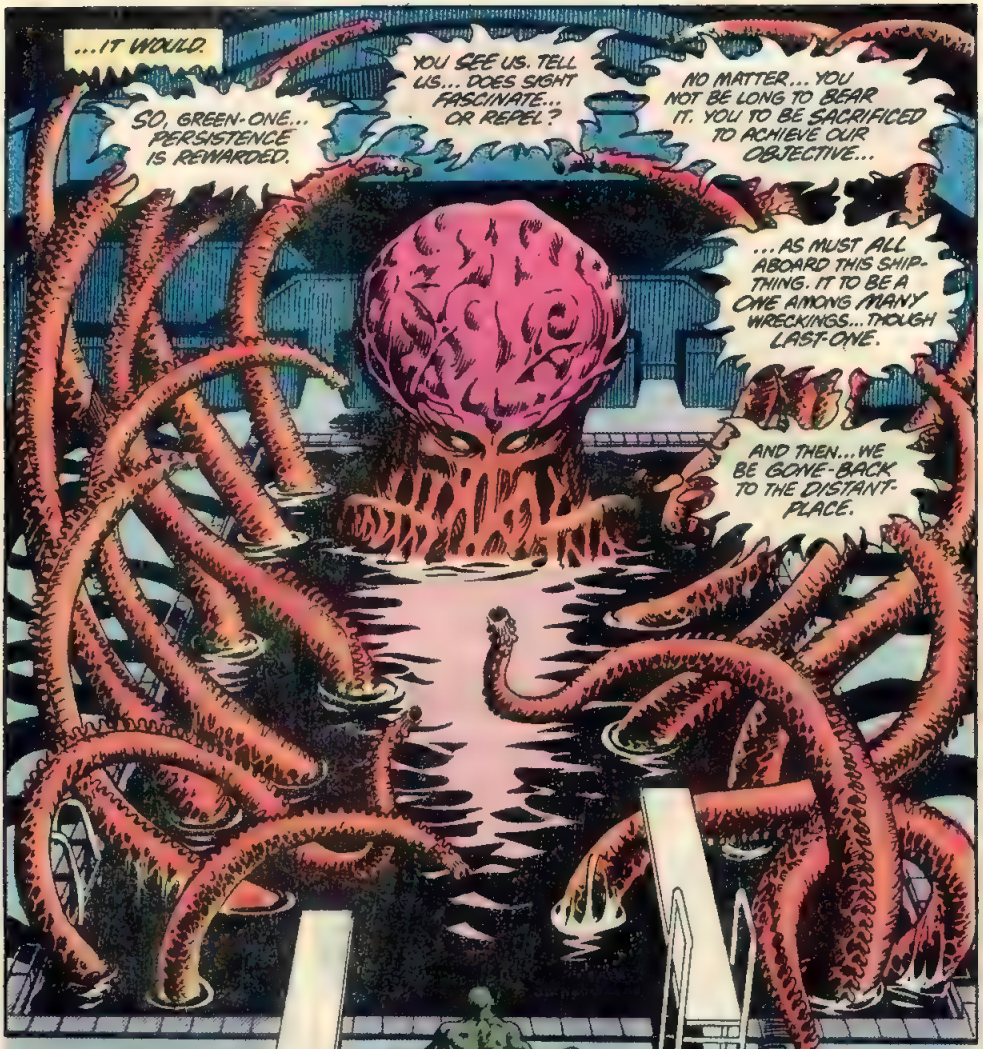

YOU HAVE A POINT THERE, LIZ. BUT SO DOES ME--THERE OBVIOUSLY IS A LOT ABOUT HIM WE DON'T KNOW.
IF HE WAS EVEN HALF THE MONSTER WE THOUGHT HE WAS...
...WOULD HE HAVE LET US LIVE JUST NOW?

"NOT ONLY THAT--BUT HE'S PROBABLY LYING TO HIS BOSSES --TO COVER FOR US--RIGHT NOW."

YOU WANTED A MEETING, KAY? YOU'VE GOT ONE. HERE. NOW. SO...?
YOU CAN SCRATCH THAT TV-REPORTER--THE TREMAYNE WOMAN--FROM THE AGENDA.
SHE'S DEAD--MAITLAND, TOO--

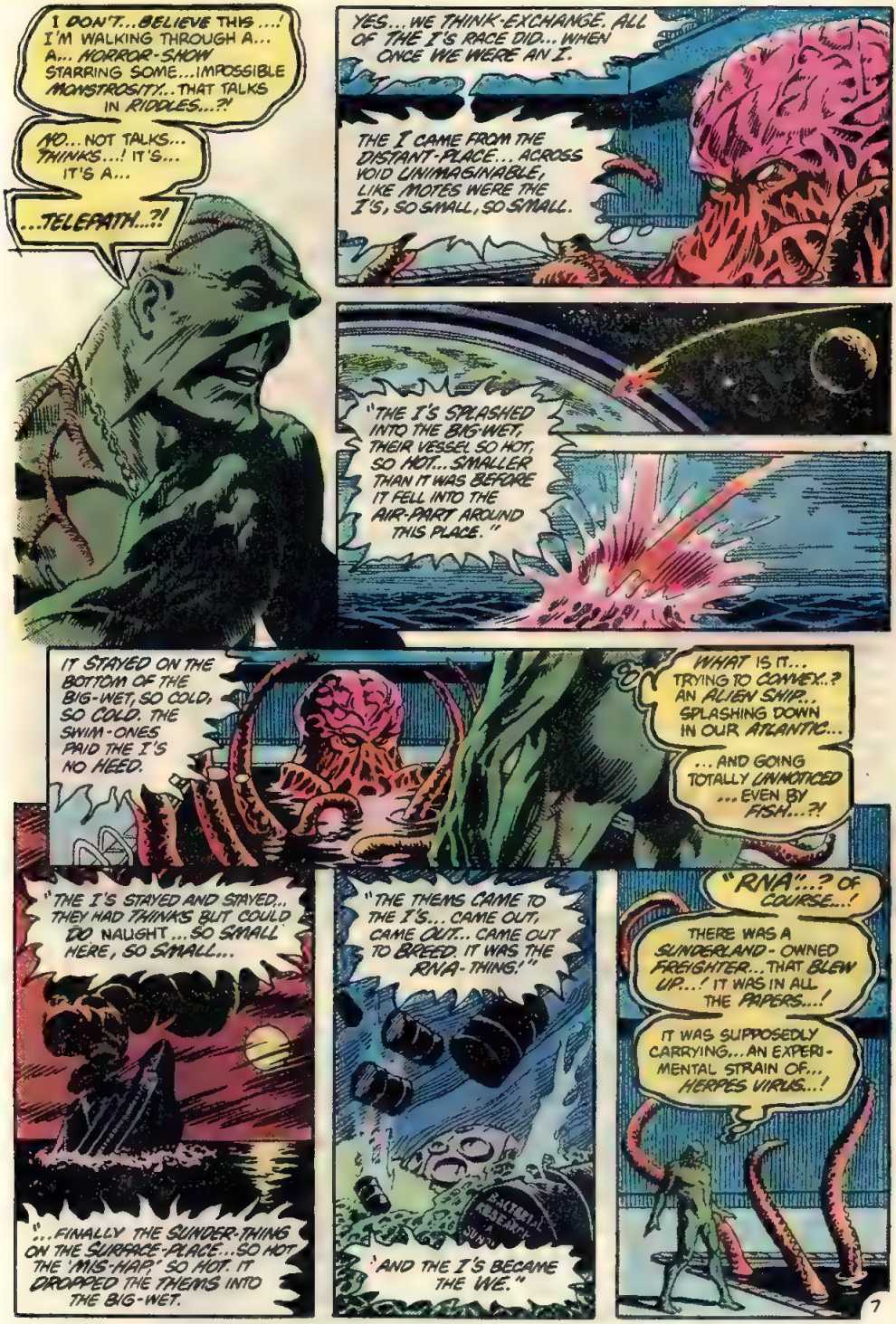

"--KILLED BY THOSE THINGS. IT'S...IT'S SOME KIND OF PLAGUE. BY THE TIME I CAUGHT UP WITH YOU GENTLEMEN, ALMOST EVERYONE ABOARD WAS BEING TRANSFORMED!"
--A SUSPICION NOW DAWNING ON ALEC HOLLAND:
FOR THREE DECKS NOW... I'VE FOLLOWED THAT THING'S TRAIL...
...AND NOT A SOUL... IN SIGHT...! NO PASSENGERS ...NO CREW...!

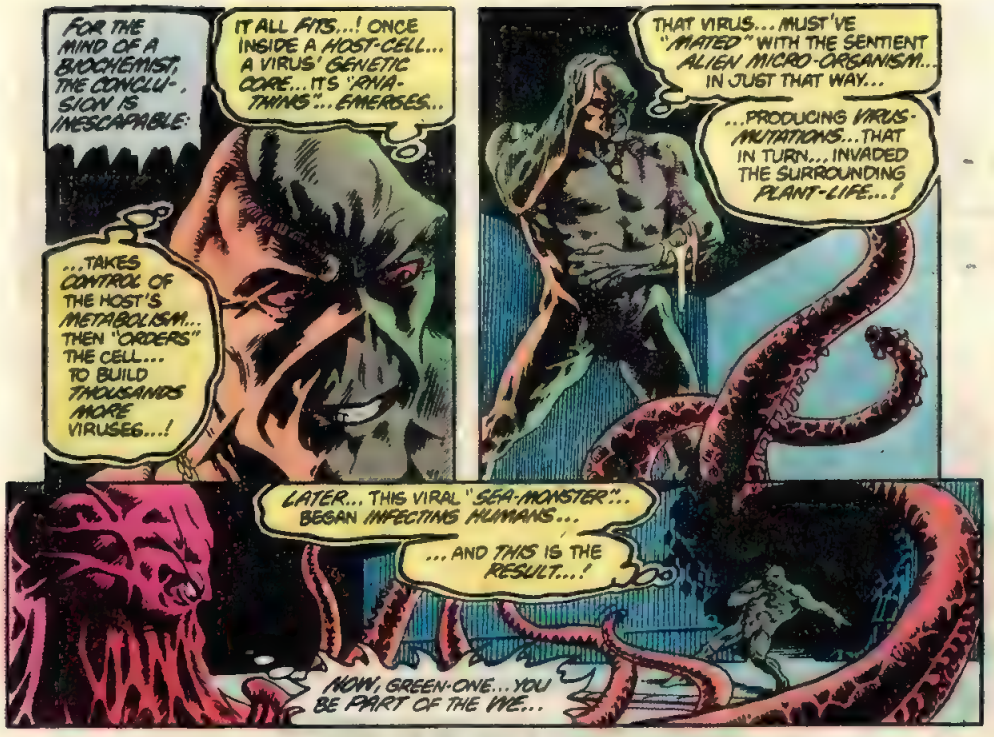
WHY?... WHY...? IS IT... DEVOURING EVERYTHING IN ITS PATH...?
BE HONEST...WITH YOURSELF, ALEC...! DO YOU REALLY... WANT TO FIND OUT...? DO YOU--
AND IF HORROR COULD SEND A SHIVER DOWN THE ROOT THAT IS ALEC HOLLAND'S SPINE...

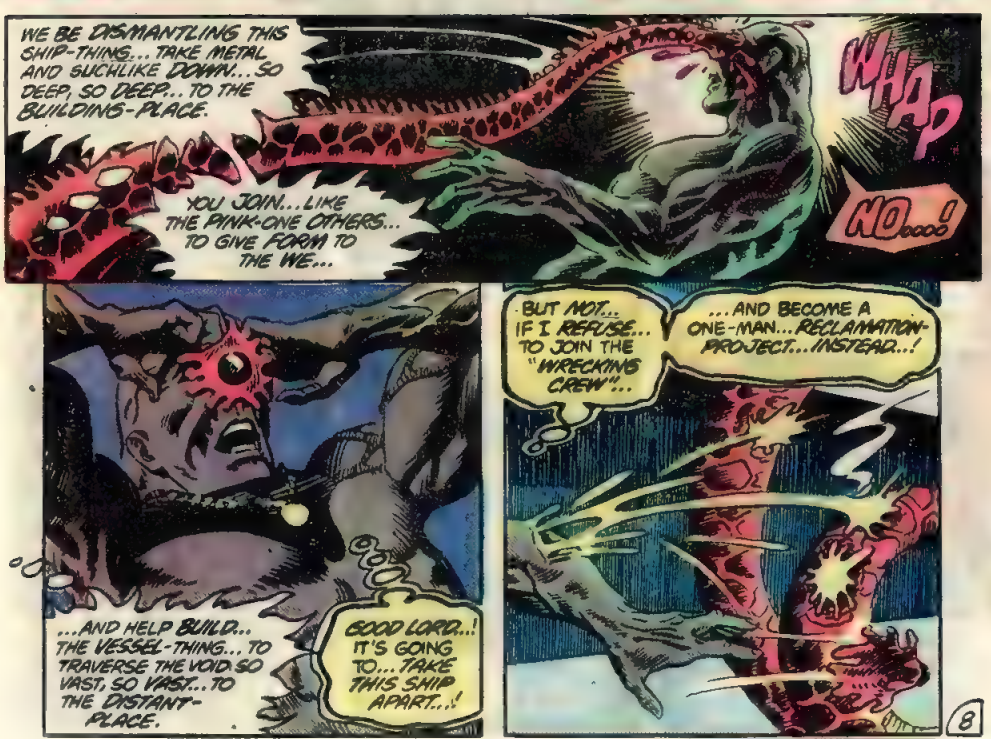

...IT WOULD.
SO, GREEN-ONE... PERSISTENCE IS REWARDED.
YOU SEE US. TELL US... DOES SIGHT FASCINATE... OR REPEL?
NO MATTER... YOU NOT BE LONG TO BEAR IT. YOU TO BE SACRIFICED TO ACHIEVE OUR OBJECTIVE...
...AS MUST ALL ABOARD THIS SHIP-THING. IT TO BE A ONE AMONG MANY WRECKINGS... THOUGH LAST-ONE.
AND THEN... WE BE GONE-BACK TO THE DISTANT-PLACE.

I HAVE SEEN THE SPLINTERED TIMBERS OF A HUNDRED SHATTERED HULLS

a MARTIN PASKO (writer) . TOM YEATES (artist) . LEN WEIN (editor) presentation/ assisted by: TATJANA WOOD (colorist) . JOHN COSTANZA (letterer)


I DON'T...BELIEVE THIS ....! I'M WALKING THROUGH A... A... HORROR-SHOW STARRING SOME...IMPOSSIBLE MONSTROSITY... THAT TALKS IN RIDDLES...?!
NO... NOT TALKS... THINKS...! IT'S... IT'S A...
...TELEFATH...?!
YES... WE THINK-EXCHANGE. ALL OF THE I'S RACE DID... WHEN ONCE WE WERE AN I.
THE I CAME FROM THE DISTANT-PLACE... ACROSS VOID UNIMAGINABLE, LIKE MOTES WERE THE I'S, SO SMALL, SO SMALL.
"THE I'S SPLASHED INTO THE BIG-WET. THEIR VESSEL SO HOT, SO HOT... SMALLER THAN IT WAS BEFORE IT FELL INTO THE AIR-PART AROUND THIS PLACE."
IT STAYED ON THE BOTTOM OF THE BIG-WET, SO COLD, SO COLD. THE SWIM-ONES PAID THE I'S NO HEED.
WHAT IS IT... TRYING TO CONVEY...? AN ALIEN SHIP... SPLASHING DOWN IN OUR ATLANTIC...
...AND GOING TOTALLY UNNOTICED ...EVEN BY FISH...?!
"THE I'S STAYED AND STAYED.. THEY HAD THINKS BUT COULD DO NAUGHT ...SO SMALL HERE, SO SMALL...
"...FINALLY THE SUNDER-THINS ON THE SURFACE-PLACE...SO HOT THE 'MIS-HAP' SO HOT. IT DROPPED THE THEMS INTO THE BIG-WET.
"THE THEMS CAME TO THE I'S... CAME OUT, CAME OUT... CAME OUT TO BREED. IT WAS THE RNA-THINS!"
AND THE I'S BECAME THE WE."
"RNA"...? OF COURSE...!
THERE WAS A SUNDERLAND-OWNED FREIGHTER... THAT BLEW UP...! IT WAS IN ALL THE PAPERS...!
IT WAS SUPPOSEDLY CARRYING... AN EXPERIMENTAL STRAIN OF... HERPES VIRUS...!


FOR THE MIND OF A BIOCHEMIST, THE CONCLUSION IS INESCAPABLE:
IT ALL FITS...! ONCE INSIDE A HOST-CELL... A VIRUS' GENETIC CORE... IT'S "RNA-THING"... EMERGES...
...TAKES CONTROL OF THE HOST'S METABOLISM... THEN "ORDERS" THE CELL... TO BUILD THOUSANDS MORE VIRUSES...!
THAT VIRUS... MUST'VE "MATED" WITH THE SENTIENT ALIEN MICRO-ORGANISM... IN JUST THAT WAY...
...PRODUCING VIRUS-MUTATIONS... THAT IN TURN... INVADED THE SURROUNDING PLANT-LIFE...!
LATER... THIS VIRAL "SEA-MONSTER"... BEGAN INFECTING HUMANS...
...AND THIS IS THE RESULT...!
NOW, GREEN-ONE... YOU BE PART OF THE WE...


WE BE DISMANTLING THIS SHIP-THING... TAKE METAL AND SUCHLIKE DOWN... SO DEEP, SO DEEP... TO THE BUILDING-PLACE.
YOU JOIN... LIKE THE PINK-ONE OTHERS... TO GIVE FORM TO THE WE...
WHAP
NO...!
...AND HELP BUILD... THE VESSEL-THING... TO TRAVERSE THE VOID SO VAST, SO VAST... TO THE DISTANT-PLACE.
GOOD LORD...! IT'S GOING TO... TAKE THIS SHIP APART...!
BUT NOT... IF I REFUSE... TO JOIN THE "WRECKING CREW"...
...AND BECOME A ONE-MAN... RECLAMATION-PROJECT... INSTEAD...!

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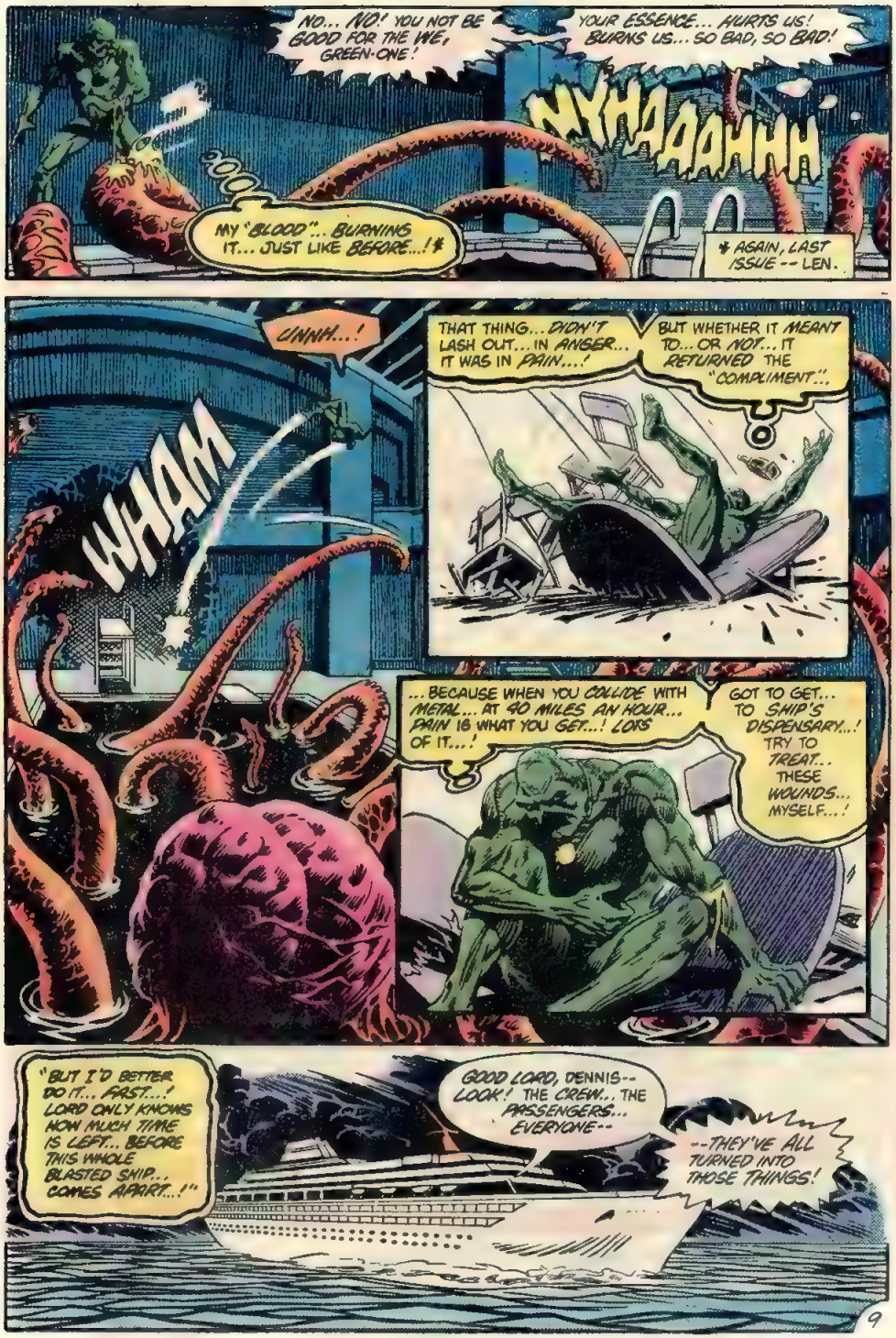
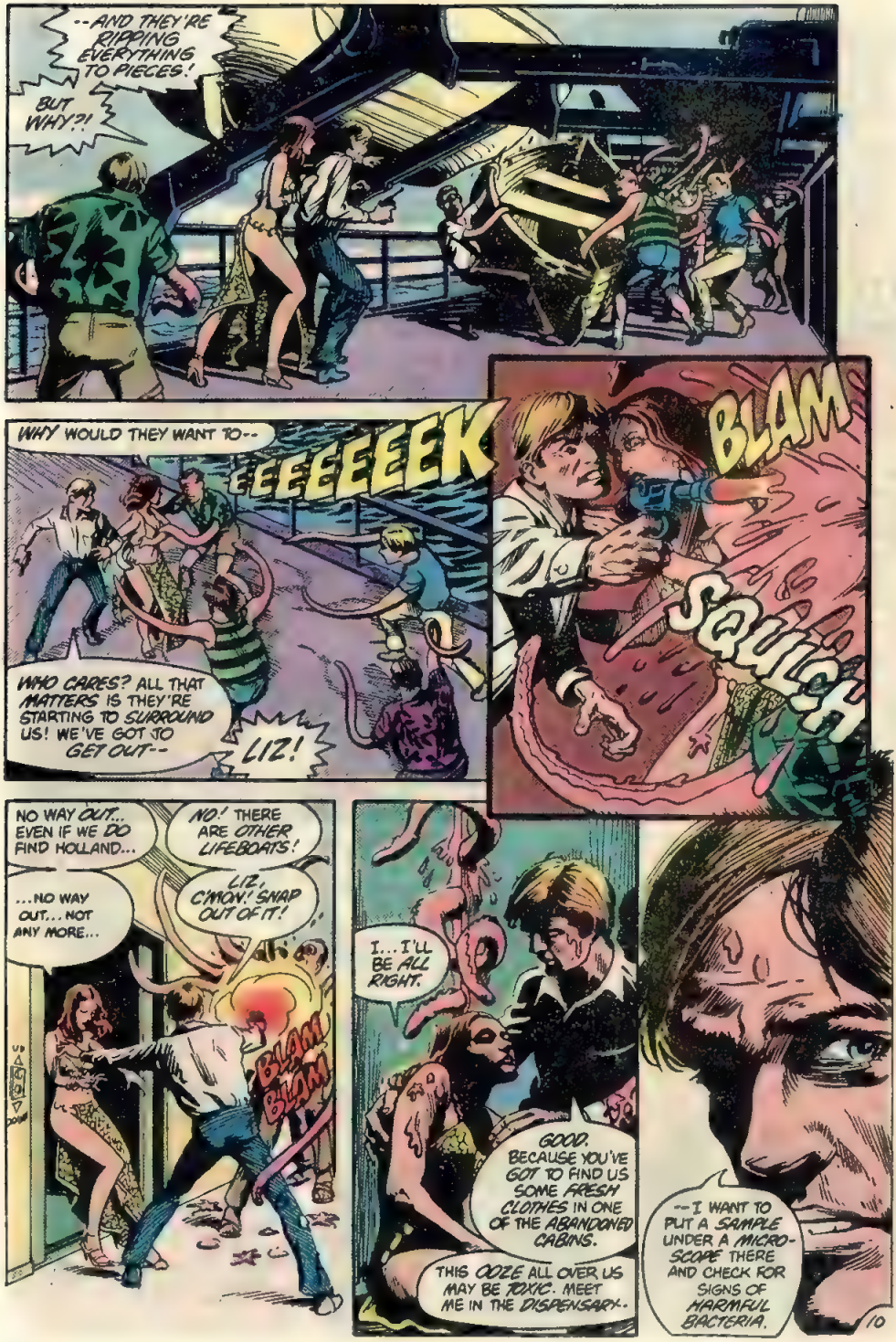
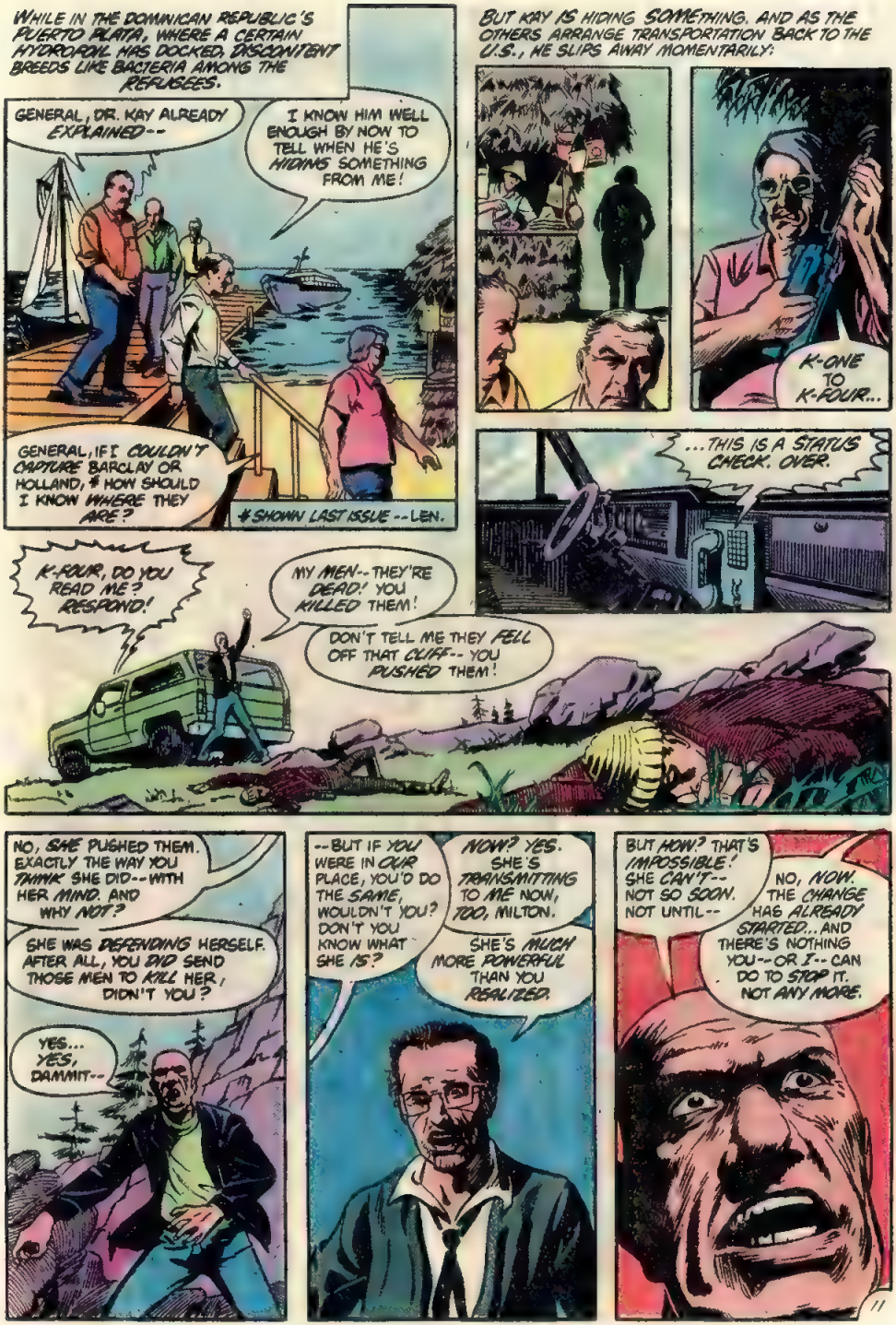
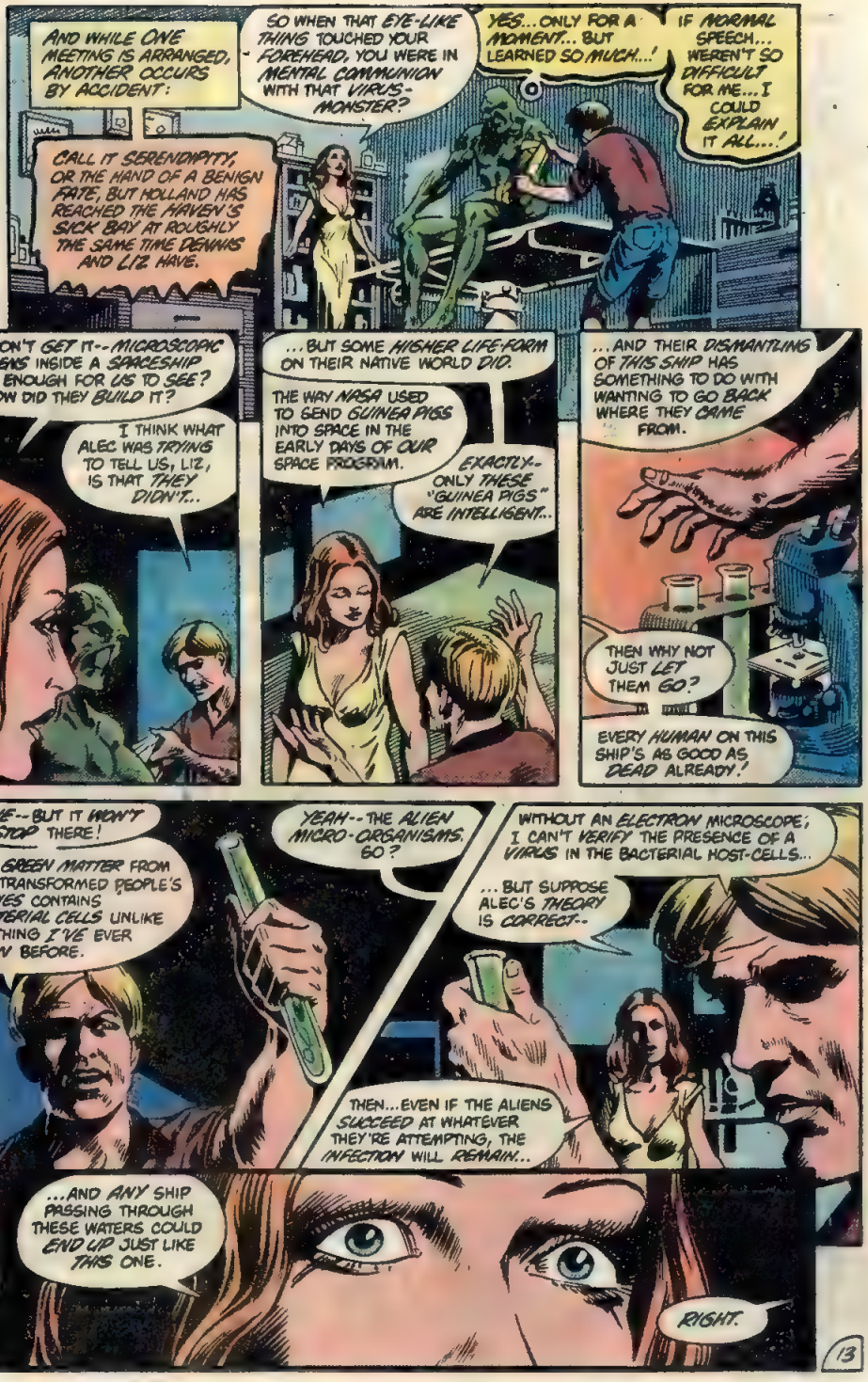
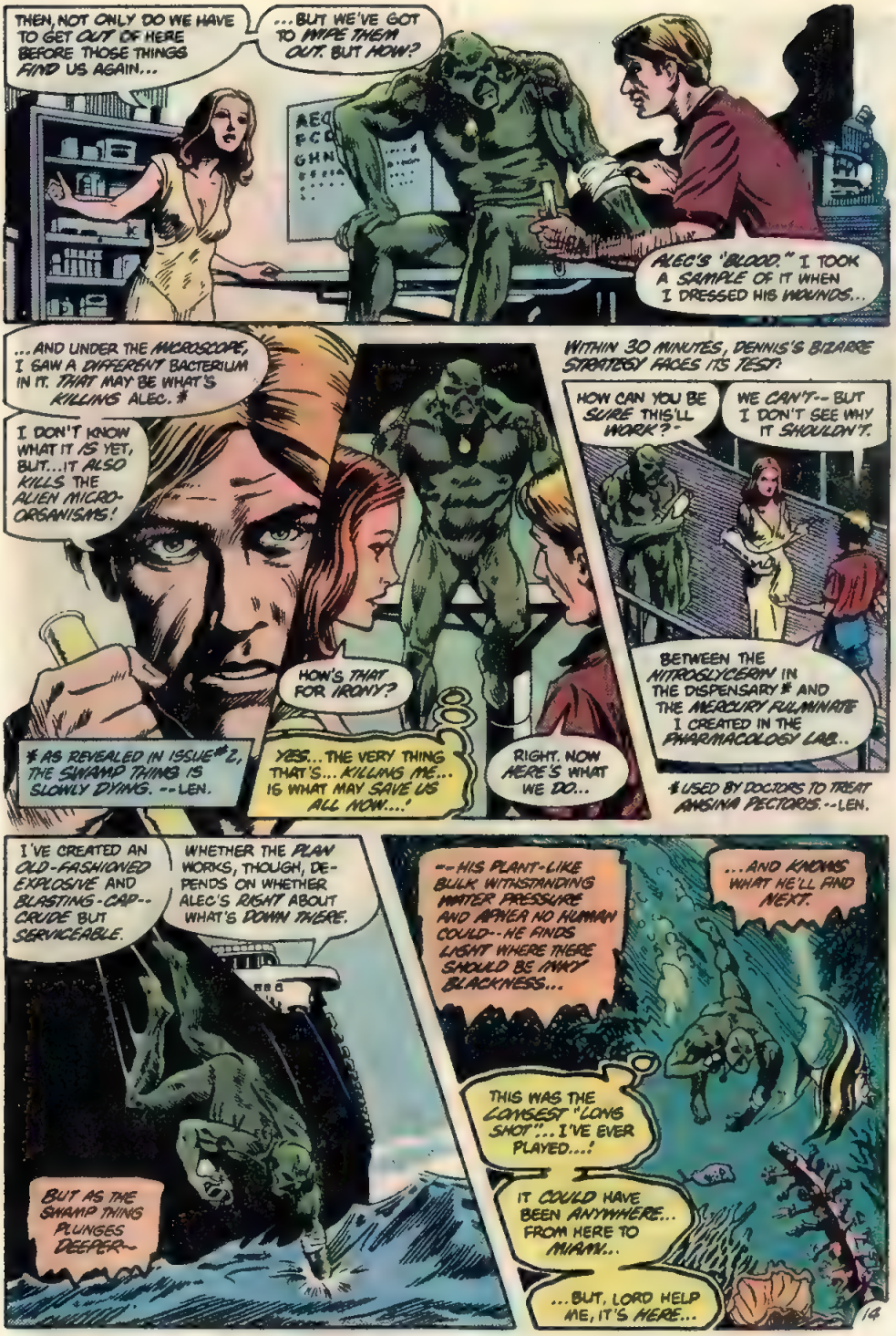

NO... NO! YOU NOT BE GOOD FOR THE WE, GREEN-ONE!
YOUR ESSENCE... HURTS US! BURNS US... SO BAD, SO BAD!
NYHAAAHHH
MY "BLOOD"... BURNING IT... JUST LIKE BEFORE...!*
* AGAIN, LAST ISSUE -- LEN.
UNNH...!
WHAM
THAT THING... DIDN'T LASH OUT... IN ANGER... IT WAS IN PAIN...!
BUT WHETHER IT MEANT TO... OR NOT... IT RETURNED THE "COMPLIMENT"...
...BECAUSE WHEN YOU COLLIDE WITH METAL... AT 60 MILES AN HOUR... PAIN IS WHAT YOU GET...! LOTS OF IT...!
GOT TO GET... TO SHIP'S DISPENSARY...! TRY TO TREAT... THESE WOUNDS... MYSELF...!
"BUT I'D BETTER DO IT... FAST...! LORD ONLY KNOWS HOW MUCH TIME IS LEFT... BEFORE THIS WHOLE BLASTED SHIP... COMES APART...!"
GOOD LORD, DENNIS-- LOOK! THE CREW... THE PASSENGERS... EVERYONE--
--THEY'VE ALL TURNED INTO THOSE THINGS!

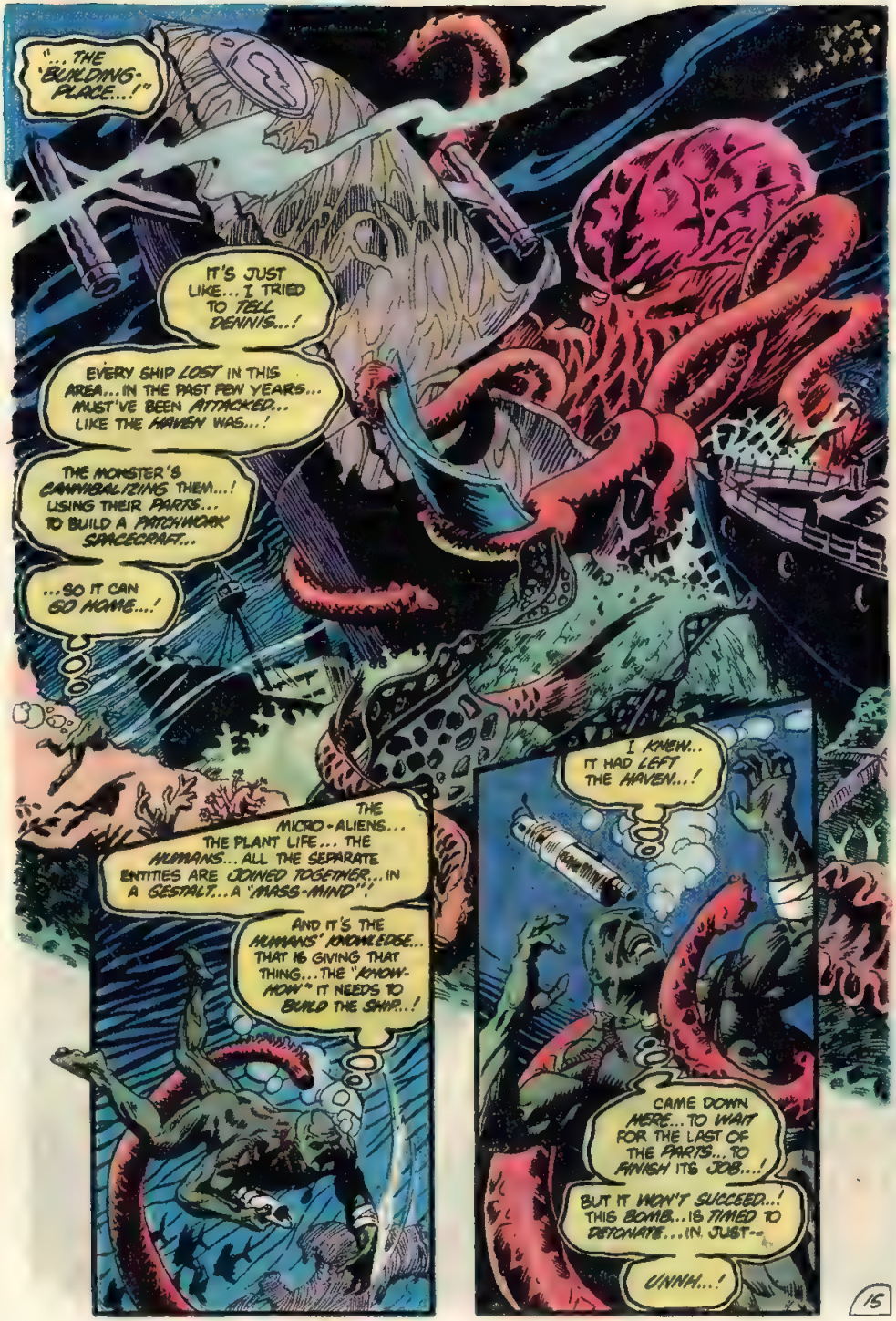

--AND THEY'RE RIPPING EVERYTHING TO PIECES!
BUT WHY?!
WHY WOULD THEY WANT TO--
EEEEEEEK
WHO CARES? ALL THAT MATTERS IS THEY'RE STARTING TO SURROUND US! WE'VE GOT TO GET OUT--
LIZ!
BLAM
SQUISH
NO WAY OUT.. EVEN IF WE DO FIND HOLLAND...
NO! THERE ARE OTHER LIFEBOATS!
...NO WAY OUT... NOT ANY MORE...
LIZ C'MON! SNAP OUT OF IT!
BLAM BLAM
I... I'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
GOOD. BECAUSE YOU'VE GOT TO FIND US SOME FRESH CLOTHES IN ONE OF THE ABANDONED CABINS.
THIS OOZE ALL OVER US MAY BE TOXIC. MEET ME IN THE DISPENSARY.
--I WANT TO PUT A SAMPLE UNDER A MICRO-SCOPE THERE AND CHECK FOR SIGNS OF HARMFUL BACTERIA.


WHILE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC'S PUERTO PLATA, WHERE A CERTAIN HYDROFOIL HAS DOCKED, DISCONTENT BREEDS LIKE BACTERIA AMONG THE REFUGEES.
GENERAL, DR. KAY ALREADY EXPLAINED--
I KNOW HIM WELL ENOUGH BY NOW TO TELL WHEN HE'S HIDING SOMETHING FROM ME!
GENERAL, IF I COULDN'T CAPTURE BARCLAY OR HOLLAND, # HOW SHOULD I KNOW WHERE THEY ARE?
SHOWN LAST ISSUE --LEN.
BUT KAY IS HIDING SOMETHING. AND AS THE OTHERS ARRANGE TRANSPORTATION BACK TO THE U.S., HE SLIPS AWAY MOMENTARILY:
K-ONE TO K-FOUR...
...THIS IS A STATUS CHECK. OVER.
K-FOUR, DO YOU READ ME? RESPOND!
MY MEN--THEY'RE DEAD! YOU KILLED THEM!
DON'T TELL ME THEY FELL OFF THAT CLIFF-- YOU PUSHED THEM!
NO, SHE PUSHED THEM. EXACTLY THE WAY YOU THINK SHE DID--WITH HER MIND. AND WHY NOT?
SHE WAS DEFENDING HERSELF. AFTER ALL, YOU DID SEND THOSE MEN TO KILL HER, DIDN'T YOU?
YES... YES, DAMMIT--
--BUT IF YOU WERE IN OUR PLACE, YOU'D DO THE SAME, WOULDN'T YOU? DON'T YOU KNOW WHAT SHE IS?
NOW? YES. SHE'S TRANSMITTING TO ME NOW, TOO, MILTON.
SHE'S MUCH MORE POWERFUL THAN YOU REALIZED.
BUT HOW? THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE! SHE CAN'T-- NOT SO SOON. NOT UNTIL--
NO, NOW. THE CHANGE HAS ALREADY STARTED... AND THERE'S NOTHING YOU--OR I--CAN DO TO STOP IT. NOT ANY MORE.

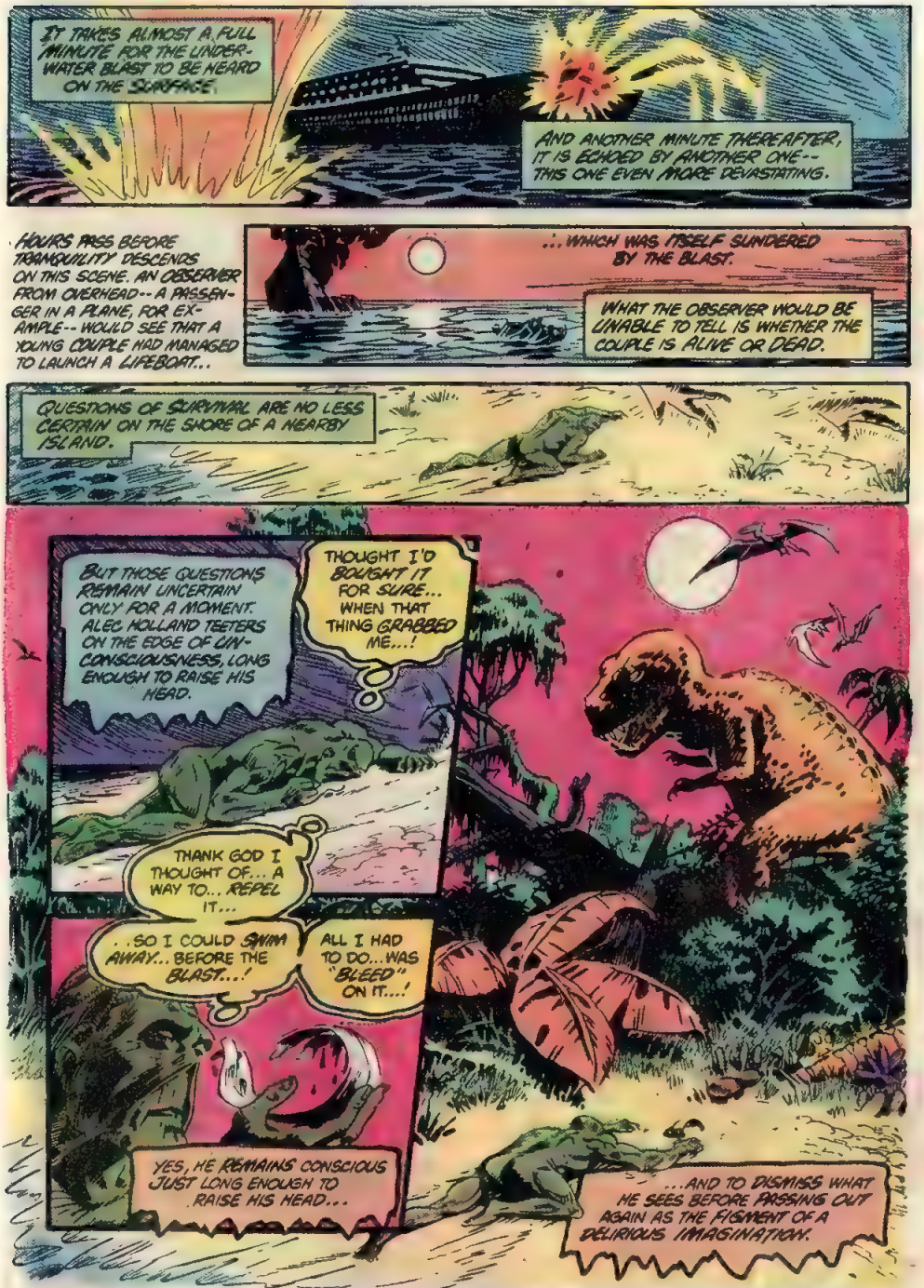
I CAN'T FIGHT HER ANY MORE--SHE'S CONTROLLING ME. AND SHE THINKS I WAS DESTINED TO BE THE CATALYST.
YOU? YOU MEAN YOU'RE ONE OF THEM, TOO?
NO... AND NEITHER WAS HOLLAND. BUT SHE THOUGHT HE WAS.
SHE'S AS WRONG ABOUT ME AS SHE WAS ABOUT HIM.
BUT SHE WON'T BELIEVE ME--NOT AFTER I WAS POSSESSED BY THAT DEMON-THING.*
SHE'S STILL ONLY A CHILD, YOU KNOW--A SUSPICIOUS, CALLOW CHILD--
* SOTST #4--LEN.
--UNSURE OF HER OWN POTENTIAL.
WHAT HAPPENS NOW?
SHE HAS A MISSION --A JOURNEY TO HER PREDECESSOR'S ORIGIN-PLACE. SHE WAS WAITING HERE FOR YOU... SO SHE COULD TAKE THE CAR.
YOU SEE, SHE KNOWS. SHE KNOWS YOU'RE AFTER HER. SHE'S ALWAYS ONE STEP AHEAD OF YOU.
WE'RE LEAVING NOW. I'M SORRY, BUT I'M FORCED TO HELP HER...
...AND MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON US ALL.
YAAHHH
K-FOUR, PICK UP! THIS IS K-ONE--I'M AT STATION FOX-1, BAND 7--
ALL RIGHT, KAREN, ALL RIGHT--I'LL TURN IT OFF.
THEN, IT IS QUIET IN THE CANYON FOR A LONG TIME.
BUT ONLY BECAUSE THIS MAN, ONE MILTON GROSSMAN, HAS BEEN WAITING--TILL HE IS CERTAIN HE IS ALONE.
K-FOUR TO K-ONE... WE HAVE TROUBLE... TWO DEAD, THE LAND-ROVER GONE... I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.
BUT I KNOW WHERE THE GIRL IS GOING... YOU'D BETTER MEET ME THERE...


AND WHILE ONE MEETING IS ARRANGED, ANOTHER OCCURS BY ACCIDENT:
CALL IT SERENDIPITY, OR THE HAND OF A BENIGN FATE, BUT HOLLAND HAS REACHED THE HAVEN'S SICK BAY AT ROUGHLY THE SAME TIME DENNIS AND LIZ HAVE.
SO WHEN THAT EYE-LIKE THING TOUCHED YOUR FOREHEAD, YOU WERE IN MENTAL COMMUNION WITH THAT VIRUS-MONSTER?
YES... ONLY FOR A MOMENT... BUT LEARNED SO MUCH...!
IF NORMAL SPEECH... WEREN'T SO DIFFICULT FOR ME... I COULD EXPLAIN IT ALL...!
I DON'T GET IT--MICROSCOPIC ALIENS INSIDE A SPACESHIP BIG ENOUGH FOR US TO SEE? HOW DID THEY BUILD IT?
I THINK WHAT ALEC WAS TRYING TO TELL US, LIZ, IS THAT THEY DIDN'T...
...BUT SOME HIGHER LIFE-FORM ON THEIR NATIVE WORLD DID.
THE WAY NASA USED TO SEND GUINEA PIGS INTO SPACE IN THE EARLY DAYS OF OUR SPACE PROGRAM.
EXACTLY--ONLY THESE "GUINEA PIGS" ARE INTELLIGENT...
...AND THEIR DISMANTLING OF THIS SHIP HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH WANTING TO GO BACK WHERE THEY CAME FROM.
THEN WHY NOT JUST LET THEM GO?
EVERY HUMAN ON THIS SHIP'S AS GOOD AS DEAD ALREADY.
TRUE--BUT IT WON'T STOP THERE!
THIS GREEN MATTER FROM THE TRANSFORMED PEOPLE'S BODIES CONTAINS BACTERIAL CELLS UNLIKE ANYTHING I'VE EVER SEEN BEFORE.
YEAH--THE ALIEN MICRO-ORGANISMS, GO?
WITHOUT AN ELECTRON MICROSCOPE, I CAN'T VERIFY THE PRESENCE OF A VIRUS IN THE BACTERIAL HOST-CELLS...
...BUT SUPPOSE ALEC'S THEORY IS CORRECT--
THEN...EVEN IF THE ALIENS SUCCEED AT WHATEVER THEY'RE ATTEMPTING, THE INFECTION WILL REMAIN...
...AND ANY SHIP PASSING THROUGH THESE WATERS COULD END UP JUST LIKE THIS ONE.
RIGHT.


THEN, NOT ONLY DO WE HAVE TO GET OUT OF HERE BEFORE THOSE THINGS FIND US AGAIN...
...BUT WE'VE GOT TO HIDE THEM OUT. BUT HOW?
ALEC'S "BLOOD." I TOOK A SAMPLE OF IT WHEN I DRESSED HIS WOUNDS...
...AND UNDER THE MICROSCOPE, I SAW A DIFFERENT BACTERIUM IN IT. THAT MAY BE WHAT'S KILLING ALEC. #
I DON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS YET, BUT...IT ALSO KILLS THE ALIEN MICRO-ORGANISMS!
HOW'S THAT FOR IRONY?
AS REVEALED IN ISSUE #2, THE SWAMP THING IS SLOWLY DYING. --LEN.
YES... THE VERY THING THAT'S... KILLING ME... IS WHAT MAY SAVE US ALL NOW....'
RIGHT. NOW HERE'S WHAT WE DO...
WITHIN 30 MINUTES, DENNIS'S BIZARRE STRATEGY FACES ITS TEST:
HOW CAN YOU BE SURE THIS'LL WORK?-
WE CAN'T-- BUT I DON'T SEE WHY IT SHOULDN'T.
BETWEEN THE NITROGLYCERIN IN THE DISPENSARY # AND THE MERCURY FULMINATE I CREATED IN THE PHARMACOLOGY LAB...
USED BY DOCTORS TO TREAT ANGINA PECTORIS. --LEN.
I'VE CREATED AN OLD-FASHIONED EXPLOSIVE AND BLASTING-CAP-- CRUDE BUT SERVICEABLE.
WHETHER THE PLAN WORKS, THOUGH, DEPENDS ON WHETHER ALEC'S RIGHT ABOUT WHAT'S DOWN THERE.
BUT AS THE SWAMP THING PLUNGES DEEPER--
--HIS PLANT-LIKE BULK WITHSTANDING WATER PRESSURE AND ANYHOW NO HUMAN COULD-- HE FINDS LIGHT WHERE THERE SHOULD BE INKY BLACKNESS...
...AND KNOWS WHAT HE'LL FIND NEXT.
THIS WAS THE CONSEST "LONG SHOT"... I'VE EVER PLAYED...!
IT COULD HAVE BEEN ANYWHERE... FROM HERE TO MIAMI...
...BUT, LORD HELP ME, IT'S HERE...


"... THE 'BUILDING-PLACE...!"
IT'S JUST LIKE... I TRIED TO TELL DENNIS...!
EVERY SHIP LOST IN THIS AREA... IN THE PAST FEW YEARS... MUST'VE BEEN ATTACKED... LIKE THE HAVEN WAS...!
THE MONSTER'S CANNIBALIZING THEM...! USING THEIR PARTS... TO BUILD A PATCHWORK SPACECRAFT...
...SO IT CAN GO HOME...!
THE MICRO-ALIENS... THE PLANT LIFE... THE HUMANS... ALL THE SEPARATE ENTITIES ARE JOINED TOGETHER... IN A GESTALT... A 'MASS-MIND'!
AND IT'S THE HUMANS' KNOWLEDGE... THAT IS GIVING THAT THING... THE "KNOW-HOW" IT NEEDS TO BUILD THE SHIP...!
I KNEW... IT HAD LEFT THE HAVEN...!
CAME DOWN HERE... TO WAIT FOR THE LAST OF THE PARTS... TO FINISH ITS JOB...!
BUT IT WON'T SUCCEED...! THIS BOMB... IS TIMED TO DETONATE... IN JUST--
UNNH...!

AND THOUGH THEY DON'T YET KNOW IT, DENNIS AND LIZ ARE ABOUT TO ENCOUNTER OBSTACLES OF THEIR OWN, IN THE HAVEN'S AFT ENGINE-ROOM.
LET'S GO--WE'VE GOT ONLY FIFTEEN MINUTES TO GET TO ONE OF THE SMALL ACCIDENT-BOATS AND LAUNCH IT.
WHEN THAT THING BLOWS, IT'LL SINK THE SHIP?
EVENTUALLY--BUT FIRST IT'LL DISPERSE A CLOUD OF THE "ANTIGEN" I CONCOCTED FROM ALEC'S "BLOOD!"
THAT OUGHT TO WIPE OUT EVERY ONE OF--
LIZ! LOOK OUT!
THAT'S IT--HIT 'EM WITH THE PESTICIDE!
LET'S GO!
KEEP SPRAYING--BUT DON'T STOP MOVING!
WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF TIME!
YAAAAZ
UNLIKE THE MAN-BRUTE HUNDREDS OF FEET BELOW...
BARROOOM
...FOR WHOM, IT SEEMS, TIME HAS ALREADY RUN OUT.


IT TAKES ALMOST A FULL MINUTE FOR THE UNDER-WATER BLAST TO BE HEARD ON THE SURFACE.
AND ANOTHER MINUTE THEREAFTER, IT IS ECHOED BY ANOTHER ONE--THIS ONE EVEN MORE DEVASTATING.
HOURS PASS BEFORE TRANQUILITY DESCENDS ON THIS SCENE. AN OBSERVER FROM OVERHEAD--A PASSENGER IN A PLANE, FOR EXAMPLE--WOULD SEE THAT A YOUNG COUPLE HAD MANAGED TO LAUNCH A LIFEBOAT...
...WHICH WAS ITSELF SUNDERED BY THE BLAST.
WHAT THE OBSERVER WOULD BE UNABLE TO TELL IS WHETHER THE COUPLE IS ALIVE OR DEAD.
QUESTIONS OF SURVIVAL ARE NO LESS CERTAIN ON THE SHORE OF A NEARBY ISLAND.
BUT THOSE QUESTIONS REMAIN UNCERTAIN ONLY FOR A MOMENT. ALEC HOLLAND TEETERS ON THE EDGE OF UN-CONSCIOUSNESS, LONG ENOUGH TO RAISE HIS HEAD.
THOUGHT I'D BOUGHT IT FOR SURE... WHEN THAT THING GRABBED ME...!
THANK GOD I THOUGHT OF... A WAY TO... REPEL IT...
...SO I COULD SWIM AWAY... BEFORE THE BLAST...!
ALL I HAD TO DO... WAS "BLEED" ON IT...!
YES, HE REMAINS CONSCIOUS JUST LONG ENOUGH TO RAISE HIS HEAD...
...AND TO DISMISS WHAT HE SEES BEFORE PASSING OUT AGAIN AS THE FIGMENT OF A DELIRIOUS IMAGINATION.

NEXT: NOT ANOTHER "SWAMP THING-VS.-DINOSAURS" STORY! BUT RATHER, THE WEIRDEST, MOST OFF-BEAT STORY OF THE YEAR--IN THIS OR ANY OTHER COMIC:
THE ISLAND OF BROKEN DREAMS!

The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
ALL NEW!
60¢
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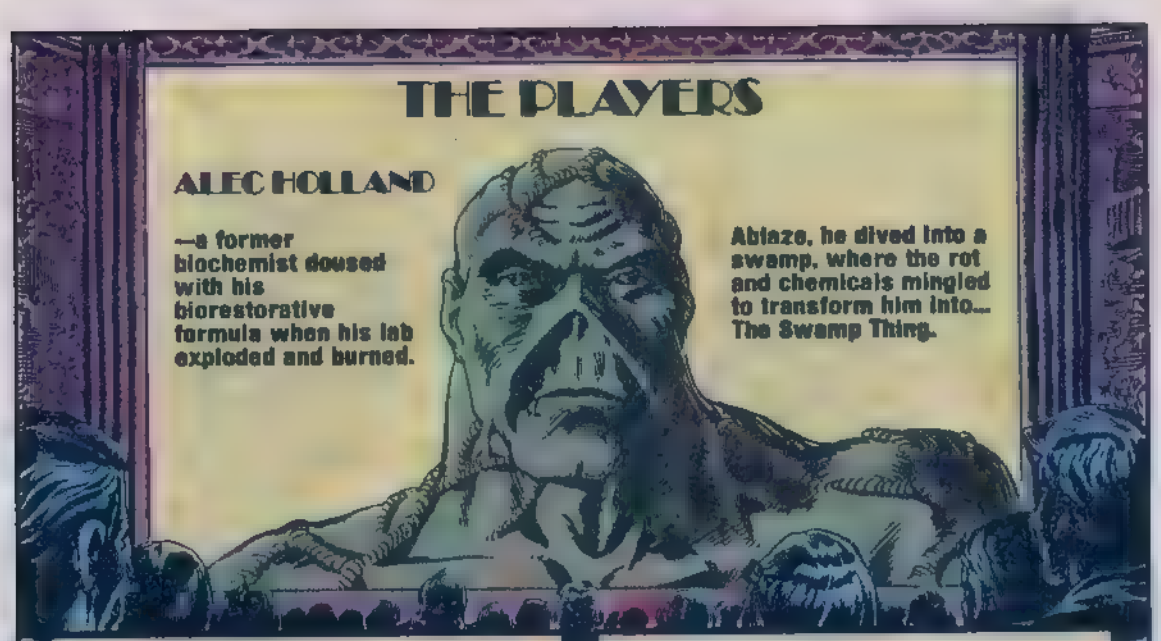
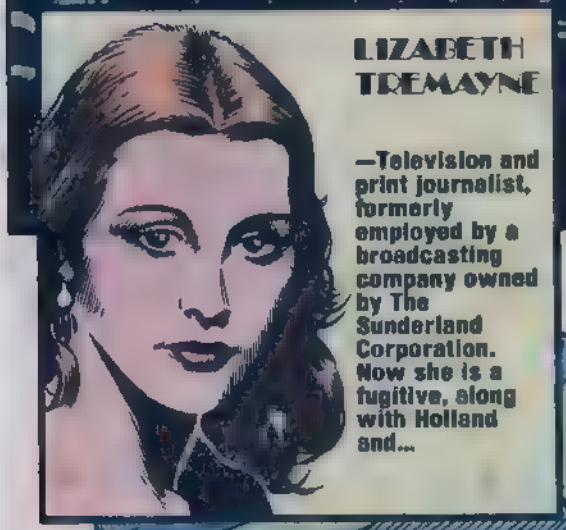
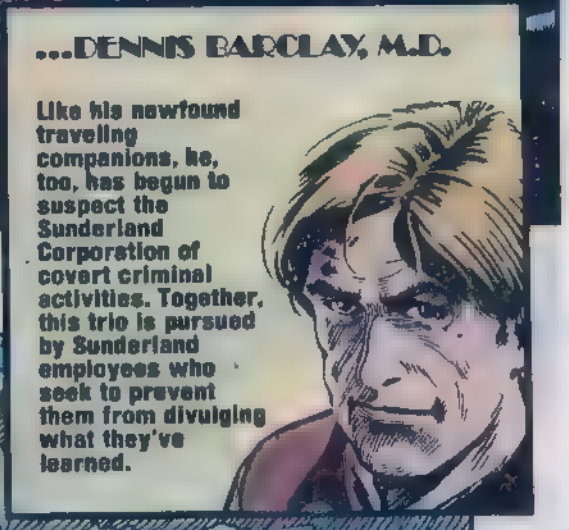
THE PLAYERS


ALEC HOLLAND
—a former biochemist doused with his biorestorative formula when his lab exploded and burned.
Ablaze, he dived into a swamp, where the rot and chemicals mingled to transform him into... The Swamp Thing.


LIZABETH TREMAYNE
—Television and print journalist, formerly employed by a broadcasting company owned by The Sunderland Corporation. Now she is a fugitive, along with Holland and...


...DENNIS BARCLAY, M.D.
Like his newfound traveling companions, he, too, has begun to suspect the Sunderland Corporation of covert criminal activities. Together, this trio is pursued by Sunderland employees who seek to prevent them from divulging what they've learned.

As our story begins, their flight has taken them to the Caribbean—where they have been shipwrecked and washed ashore on an uncharted island ...although not together...
Caribbean Sea

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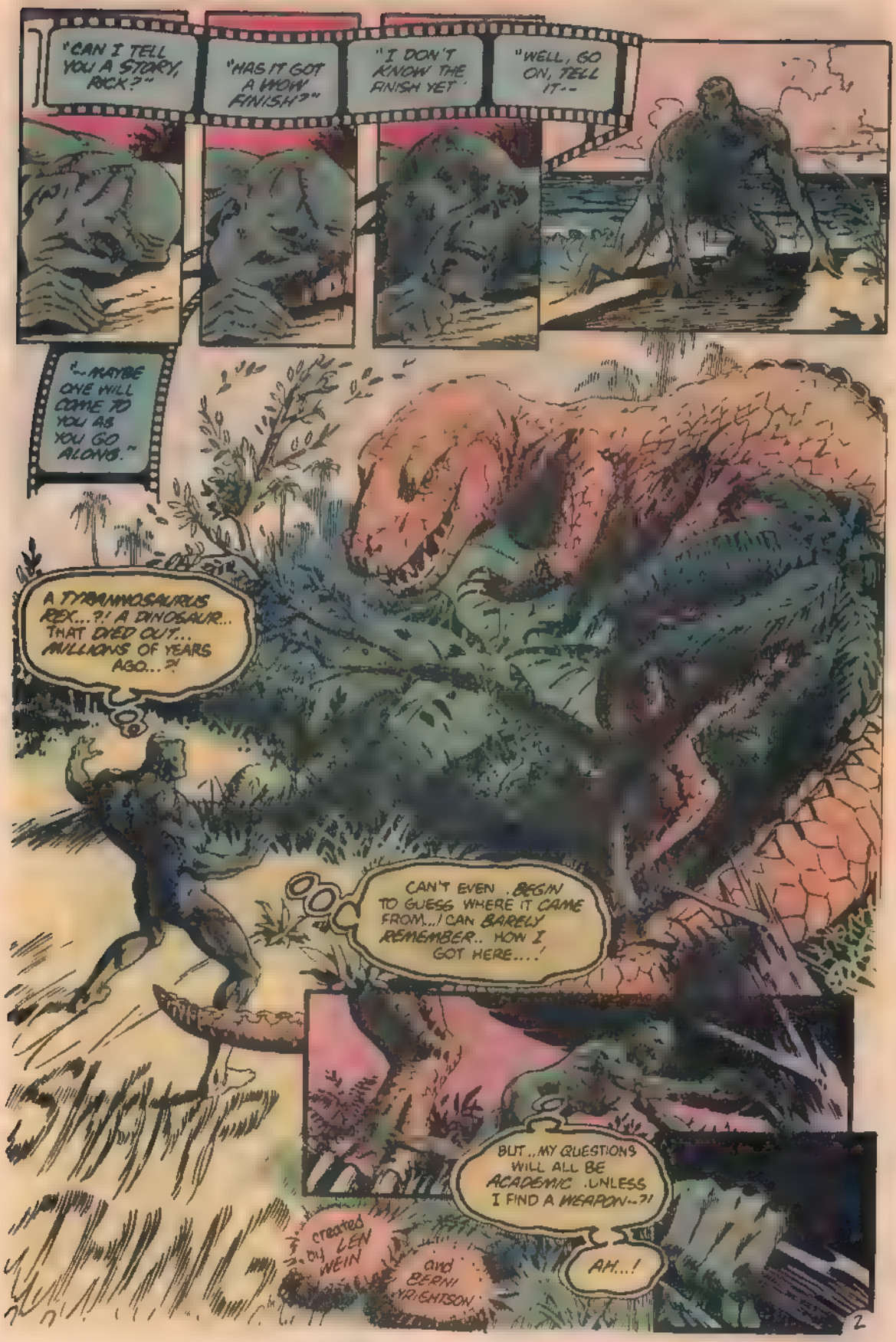
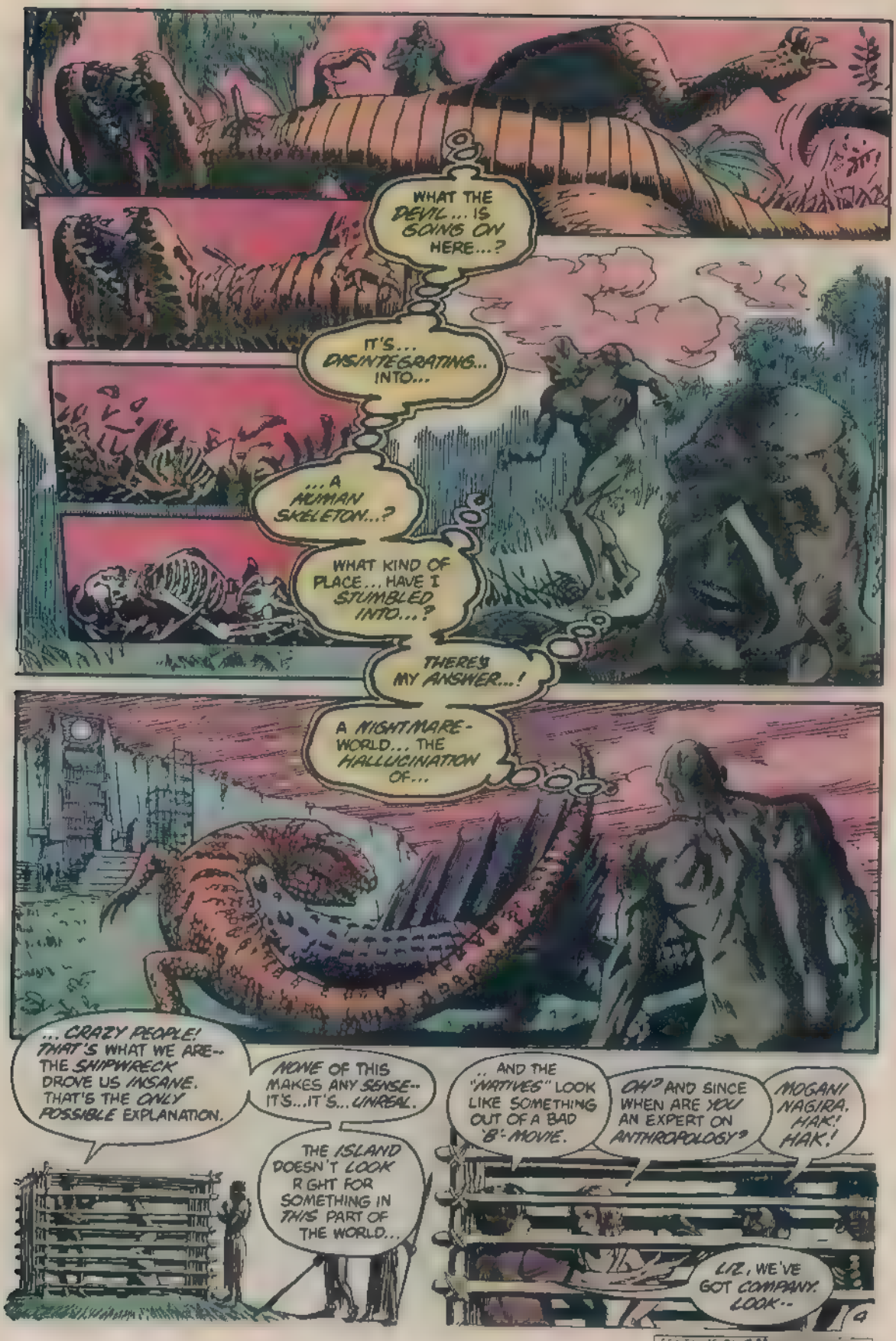
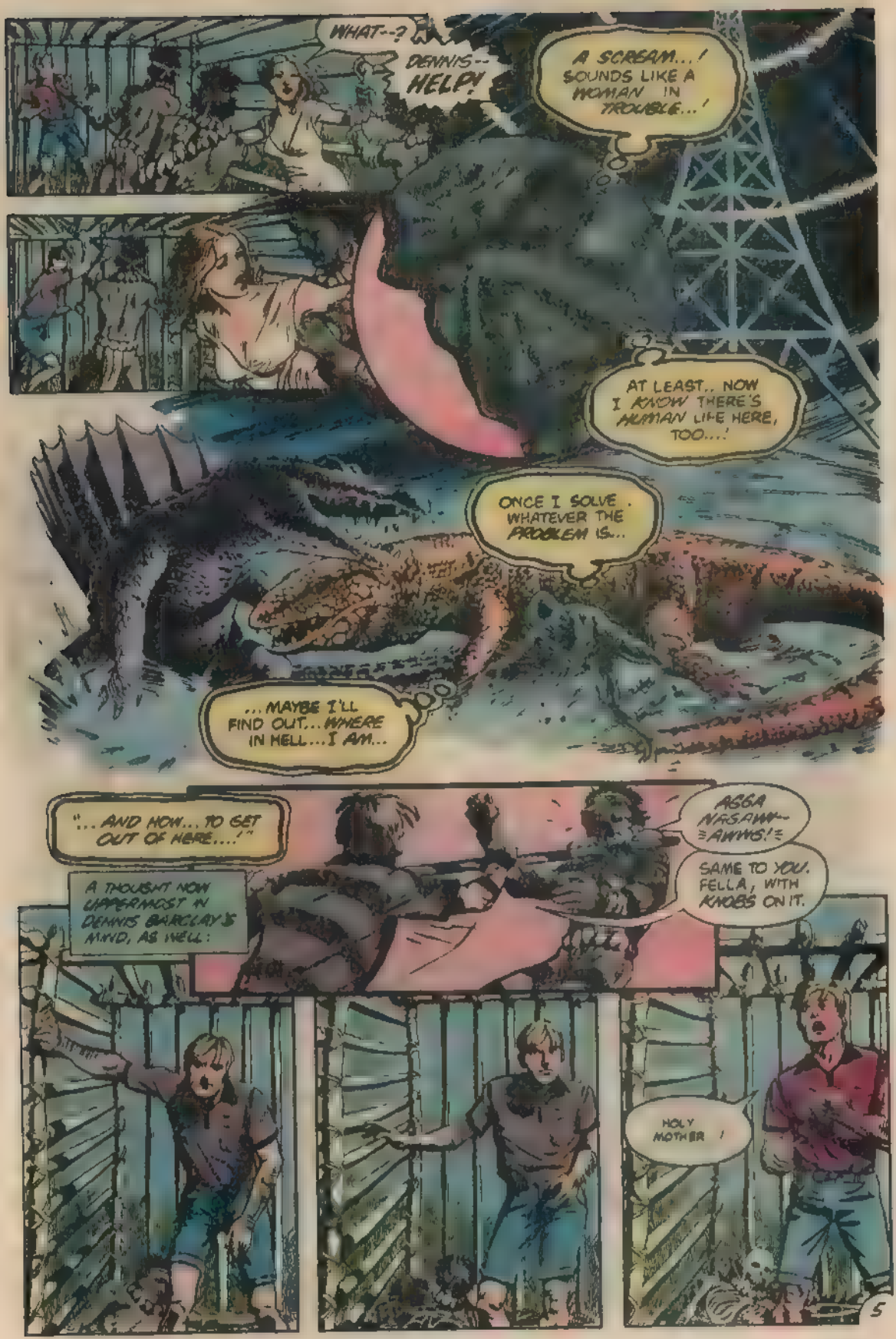
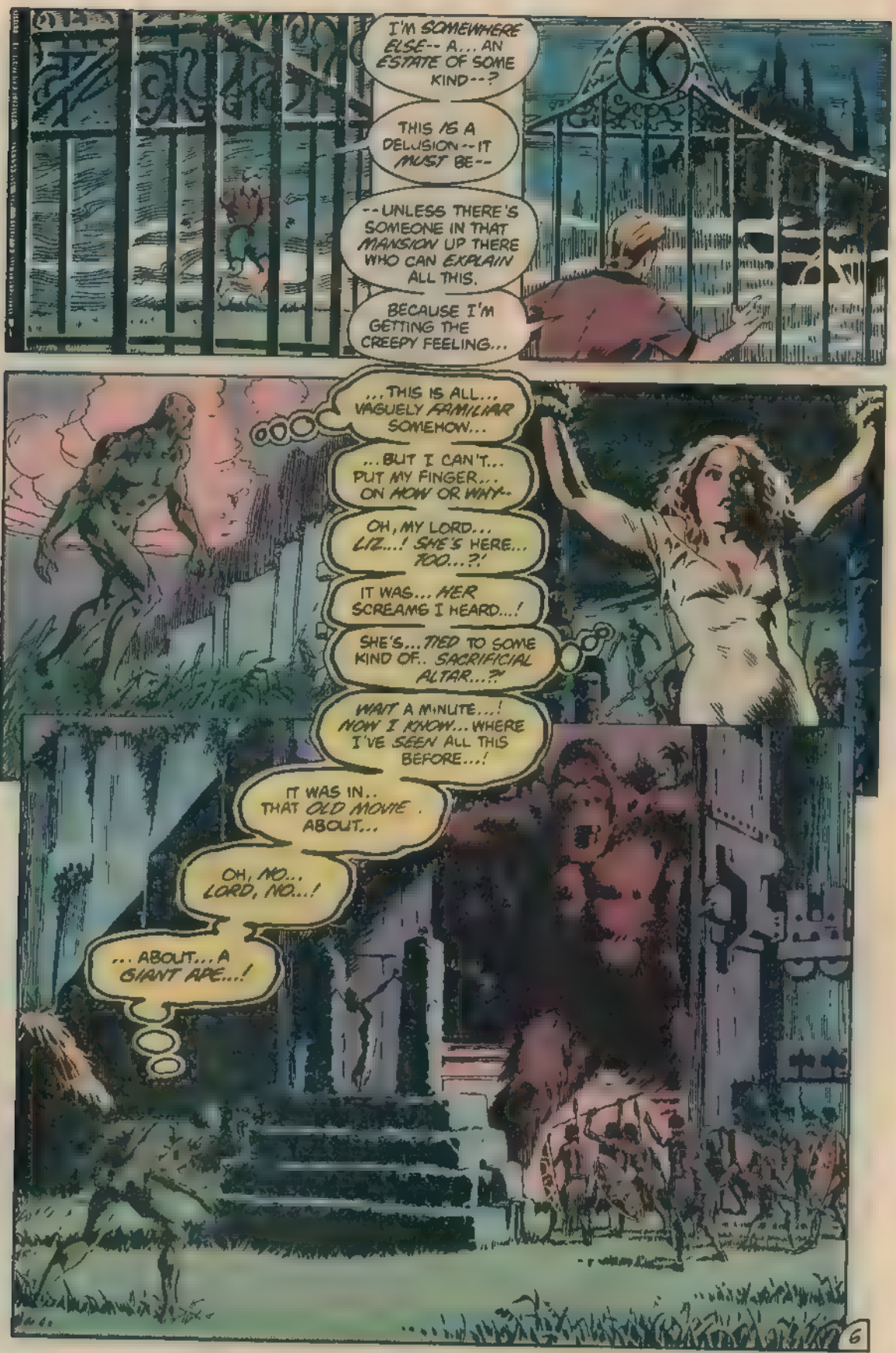
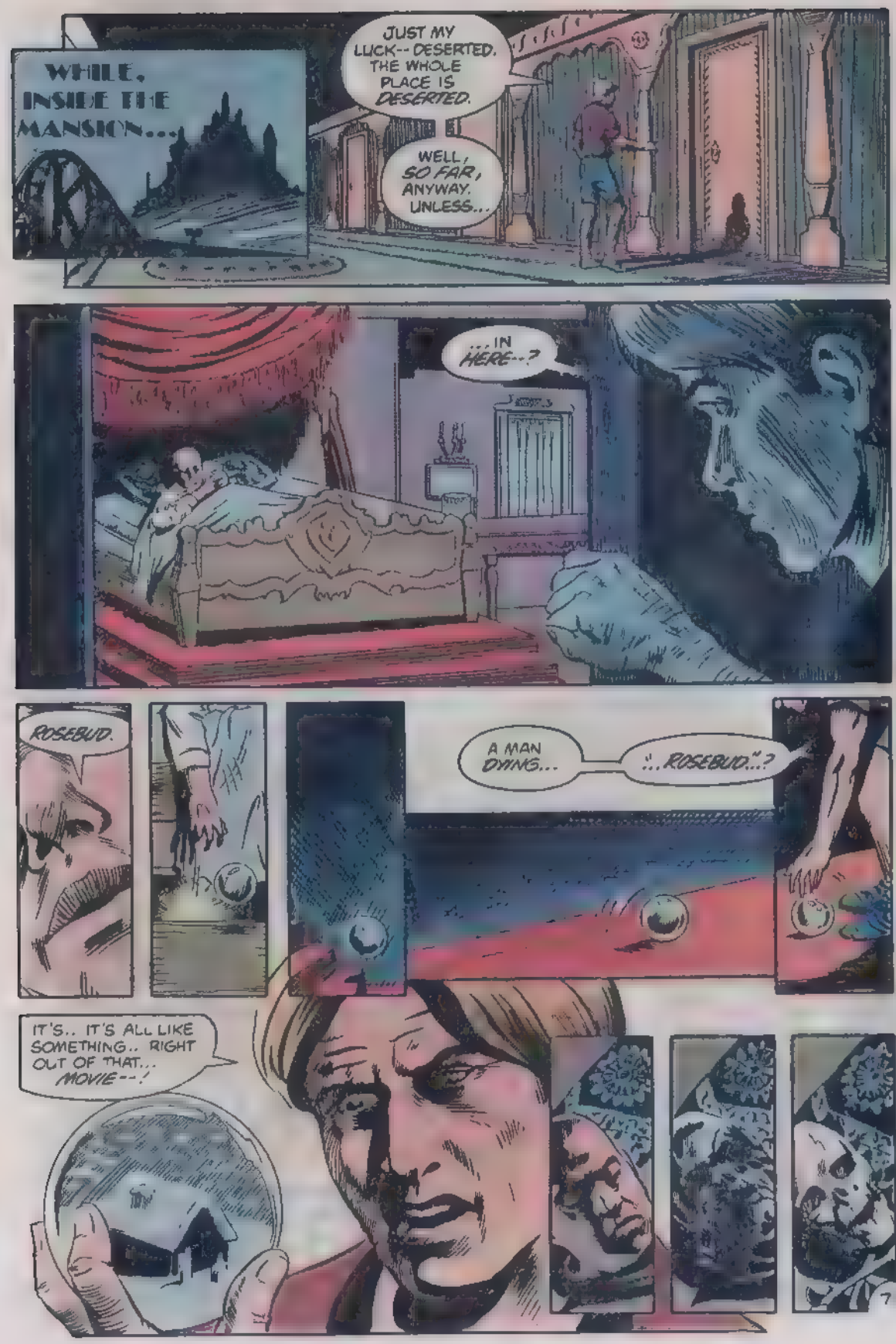

"CAN I TELL YOU A STORY, ROCK?"
"HAS IT GOT A WOW FINISH?"
"I DON'T KNOW THE FINISH YET"
"WELL, GO ON, TELL IT--
"--MAYBE ONE WILL COME TO YOU AS YOU GO ALONG."
A TYRANNOSAURUS REX...?! A DINOSAUR... THAT DIED OUT... MILLIONS OF YEARS AGO...?!
CAN'T EVEN BEGIN TO GUESS WHERE IT CAME FROM...! CAN BARELY REMEMBER.. HOW I GOT HERE....!
BUT..MY QUESTIONS WILL ALL BE ACADEMIC UNLESS I FIND A WEAPON--?!
AH...!
created by LEN WEIN
and BERNI WRIGHTSON
2

MEANWHILE, ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND...


WHAT THE DEVIL... IS GOING ON HERE...?
IT'S... DISINTEGRATING... INTO...
...A HUMAN SKELETON...?
WHAT KIND OF PLACE... HAVE I STUMBLED INTO...?
THERE'S MY ANSWER...!
A NIGHTMARE-WORLD... THE HALLUCINATION OF...
...CRAZY PEOPLE! THAT'S WHAT WE ARE-- THE SHIPWRECK DROVE US INSANE. THAT'S THE ONLY POSSIBLE EXPLANATION.
NONE OF THIS MAKES ANY SENSE-- IT'S...IT'S...UNREAL.
THE ISLAND DOESN'T LOOK R GHT FOR SOMETHING IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD...
.. AND THE "NATIVES" LOOK LIKE SOMETHING OUT OF A BAD 'B'-MOVIE.
OH? AND SINCE WHEN ARE YOU AN EXPERT ON ANTHROPOLOGY?
MOGANI NAGIRA. HAK! HAK!
LIZ, WE'VE GOT COMPANY. LOOK--
4
CONTINUED ON 3[illegible] A[illegible]


WHAT--?
DENNIS--
HELP!
A SCREAM...! SOUNDS LIKE A WOMAN IN TROUBLE...!
AT LEAST.. NOW I KNOW THERE'S HUMAN LIFE HERE, TOO...!
ONCE I SOLVE . WHATEVER THE PROBLEM IS...
...MAYBE I'LL FIND OUT... WHERE IN HELL... I AM...
"...AND HOW... TO GET OUT OF HERE...!"
A THOUGHT NOW UPPERMOST IN DENNIS BARCLAY'S MIND, AS WELL:
AGGA NARSAWA-- AWWS!
SAME TO YOU, FELLA, WITH KNOBS ON IT.
HOLY MOTHER !


I'M SOMEWHERE ELSE-- A... AN ESTATE OF SOME KIND--?
THIS IS A DELUSION--IT MUST BE--
--UNLESS THERE'S SOMEONE IN THAT MANSION UP THERE WHO CAN EXPLAIN ALL THIS.
BECAUSE I'M GETTING THE CREEPY FEELING...
...THIS IS ALL... VAGUELY FAMILIAR SOMEHOW...
...BUT I CAN'T... PUT MY FINGER... ON HOW OR WHY..
OH, MY LORD... LIZ...! SHE'S HERE... TOO...?!
IT WAS... HER SCREAMS I HEARD...!
SHE'S... TIED TO SOME KIND OF.. SACRIFICIAL ALTAR...?!
WAIT A MINUTE...! NOW I KNOW... WHERE I'VE SEEN ALL THIS BEFORE...!
IT WAS IN.. THAT OLD MOVIE . ABOUT...
OH, NO... LORD, NO...!
... ABOUT... A GIANT APE...!

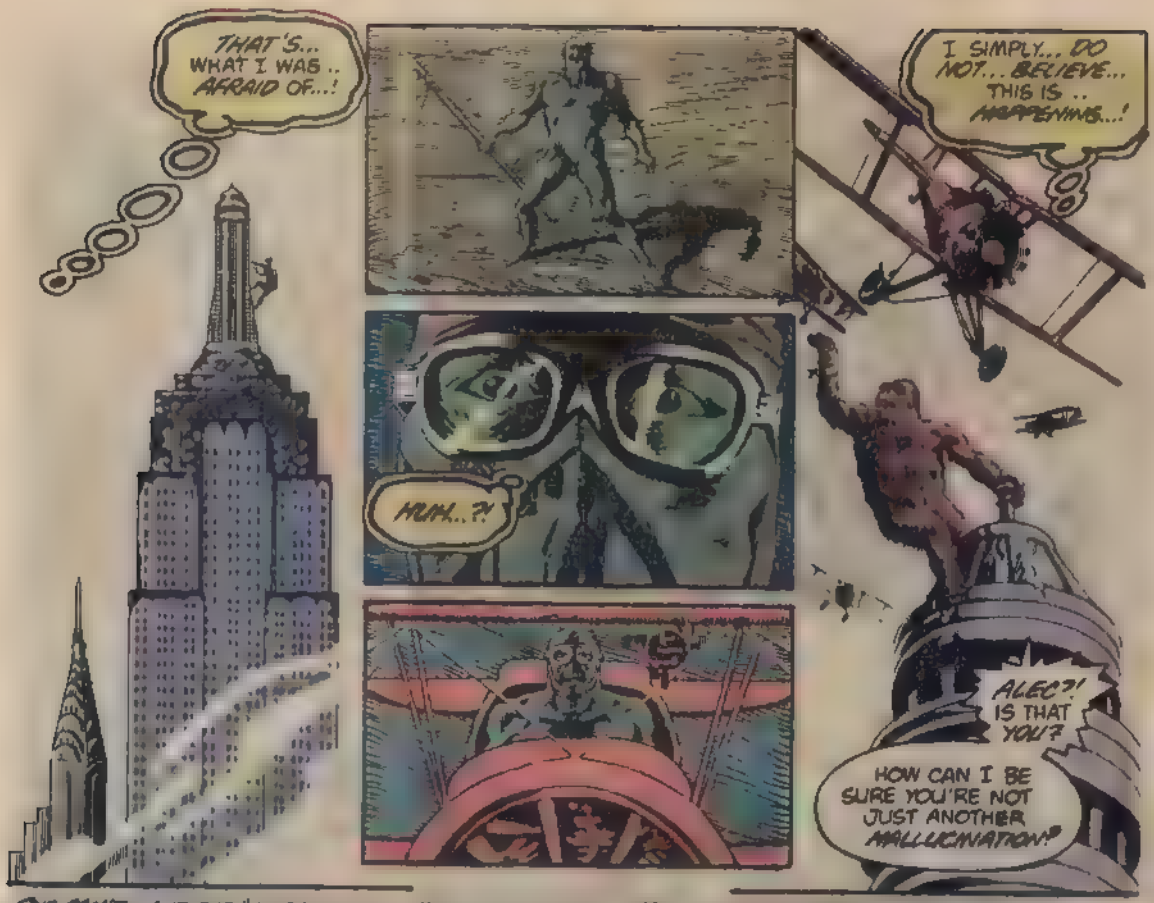

WHILE, INSIDE THE MANSION...
JUST MY LUCK-- DESERTED. THE WHOLE PLACE IS DESERTED.
WELL, SO FAR, ANYWAY. UNLESS...
...IN HERE--?
ROSEBUD.
A MAN DYING...
"...ROSEBUD"...?
IT'S.. IT'S ALL LIKE SOMETHING.. RIGHT OUT OF THAT... MOVIE--!

EVEN... IF I COULD TALK PROPERLY.. I DOUBT.. I COULD GET THE ANSWERS . I WANT.. OUT OF THESE NATIVES...!
DON'T KNOW.. WHAT THIS WEIRD RITUAL . IS ALL ABOUT...
. BUT I'M SURE...
...LIZ IS NO WILLING PARTICIPANT...!
I'VE GOT TO...GET HER AWAY FROM HERE.!
HE DISINTEGRATED.. JUST LIKE THAT.. TYRANNOSAURUS...!
BUT WHAT'S THIS AROUND HIS NECK?
AN ARMY DOG-TAG?!
INTERMISSION
"I BET THEY'RE ASLEEP IN NEW YORK. I'LL BET THEY'RE ASLEEP ALL OVER AMERICA."

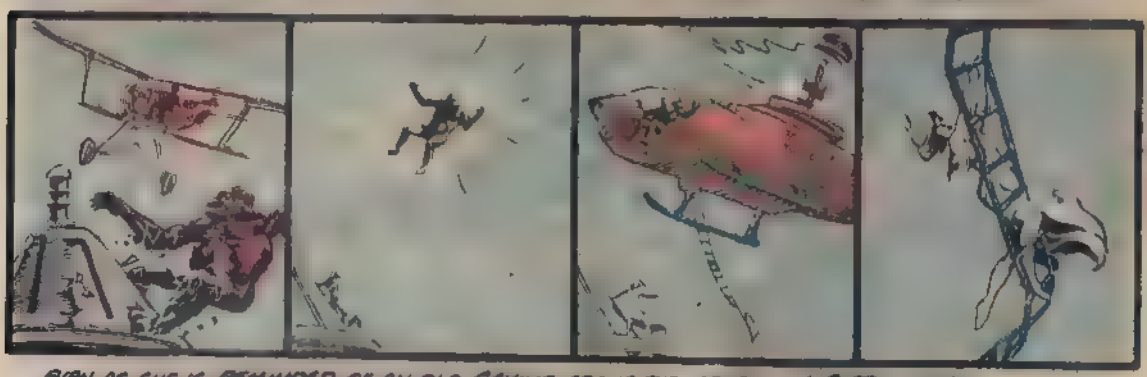
CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

NOT NECESSARILY.
IT IS DAWN ON THE 28TH, AT A SMALL AIRPORT SOMEWHERE IN NORTHERN NEW JERSEY.
TRANS-OCEANIC CHARTER SERVICE
A SUMPERLAND COMPANY
FELDNER IS THE CATALYST... AND THE GIRL'S CHANGE HAS ALREADY BEGUN? MILTON, ARE YOU SURE?
POSITIVE. SHE'S DRAINING FELDNER'S ENERGY-- BUT SHE'S NOT STRONG ENOUGH YET TO COMPLETELY CONTROL HIM.
SHE HASN'T DISCOVERED FOR HERSELF YET THAT FELDNER DOESN'T HAVE "THE POWER."
THEN... WHEN SHE DOES FIND OUT...
OH, MEIN GÖTT, I CAN'T BEAR EVEN TO IMAGINE IT.
THEY'LL BE LEAVING SOON NOW, DR. KAY.
I'VE MAINTAINED MY PSI-LINK-- AND I'VE LEARNED THAT THEY'VE CHARTERED A PLANE FOR THE TRIP--
JA... TO THE FATHER-LAND
KAREN, YOU'VE GOT TO BELIEVE ME. I'M NOT WHAT YOU THINK.
I CAN'T GIVE YOU WHAT YOU WANT-- AND I WON'T.
I WON'T BE PART OF YOUR HIDEOUS PLAN-- YOU HEAR ME?
STOP LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT. I MEAN IT! STOP IT--
--STOP IT!
KRAK
KAY! GROSSMAN! THANK GOD YOU FOUND ME! SHE'S GOT TO BE STOPPED! IT'S HAPPENING TOO FAST!
WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU, FELDNER? HAVE YOU GONE MAD?
GET BACK-- OR SHE'LL DESTROY YOU!
I'VE GOT TO RISK THAT-- IT'S NOT JUST OUR PEOPLE IN DANGER ANY MORE-- IT'S THE WORLD!
YOU'VE GOT TO WARN THE--
YAAAAHH!
9

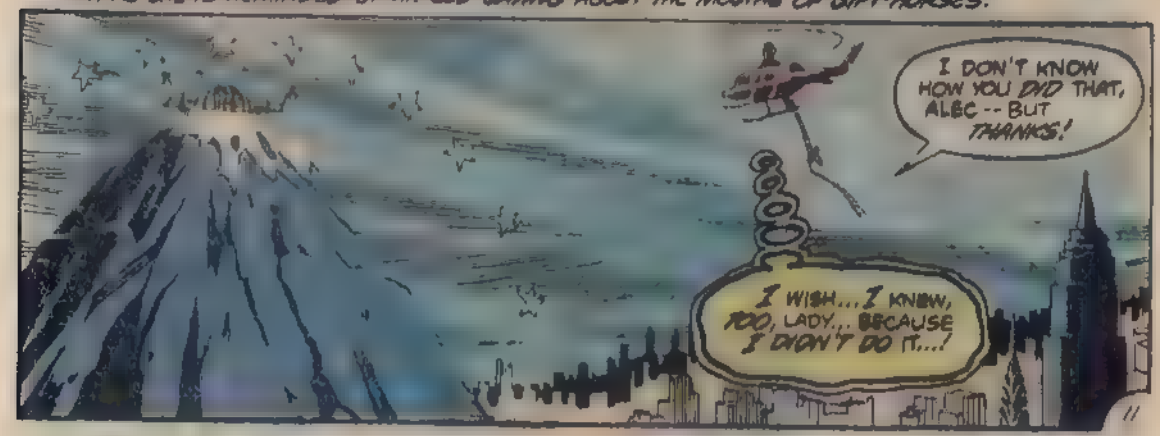
"WHO ARE YOU REALLY?
"AND WHAT WERE YOU BEFORE?
"WHAT DID YOU DO...
"...AND WHAT DID YOU THINK?"
STAY BACK...! BACK...!
BOWHANA NAKUTA! HOA! HOA!
AH, LET IT GO--WHATEVER IT IS. LIKE, WHAT'S THE DIFF?
IT'S NOT PART OF THE SCENARIO, MAN!
SO? WE'VE DONE VARIATIONS BEFORE. 'SIDES, MAYBE ONE OF THE OTHER GUYS BROUGHT THAT THING IN.
I DUNNO, CHEETO -- I AIN'T NEVER SEEN NOTHIN' LIKE THAT GREEN GIANT BEFORE.
BE COOL, "JUICE." MAYBE IT'S, LIKE, FROM AN OLD CORMAN FLICK OR SOMETHIN'. WHO KNOWS?
WHEN THE OTHERS COME IN, WE'LL ASK 'EM IF IT'S ONE OF THEIRS, THAT'S ALL.
OKAY, CHEETO-- AN WHILE YOU'RE AT IT, ASK 'EM ABOUT THAT CHICK
YEAH...
... AND ABOUT THAT GUY OVER ON THE XANADU SET.
HE'S GOT A POINT, CHEETO. SUPPOSE THEY'RE, LIKE, STRANGERS... YOU KNOW, INTRUDERS...?
SO WE HAVE SOME "COMPANY" FOR A CHANGE! SO WHAT?
"THEN WE'LL JUST DO A LITTLE NUMBER ON THEIR HEADS.' HEY, LIGHTEN UP, WILLYA? IT'LL BE A TRIP.'"
WHAT IN THE...?
I REALLY... MUST BE... LOSING MY MIND...! I TURN A CORNER...
... AND SUDDENLY... I'M ON A CITY STREET... IN THE 1930'S...?!
OH, NO..
DON'T TELL ME...!


THAT'S... WHAT I WAS .. AFRAID OF...!
I SIMPLY... DO NOT... BELIEVE... THIS IS .. HAPPENING...!
HUH..?!
ALEC?! IS THAT YOU?
HOW CAN I BE SURE YOU'RE NOT JUST ANOTHER HALLUCINATION?

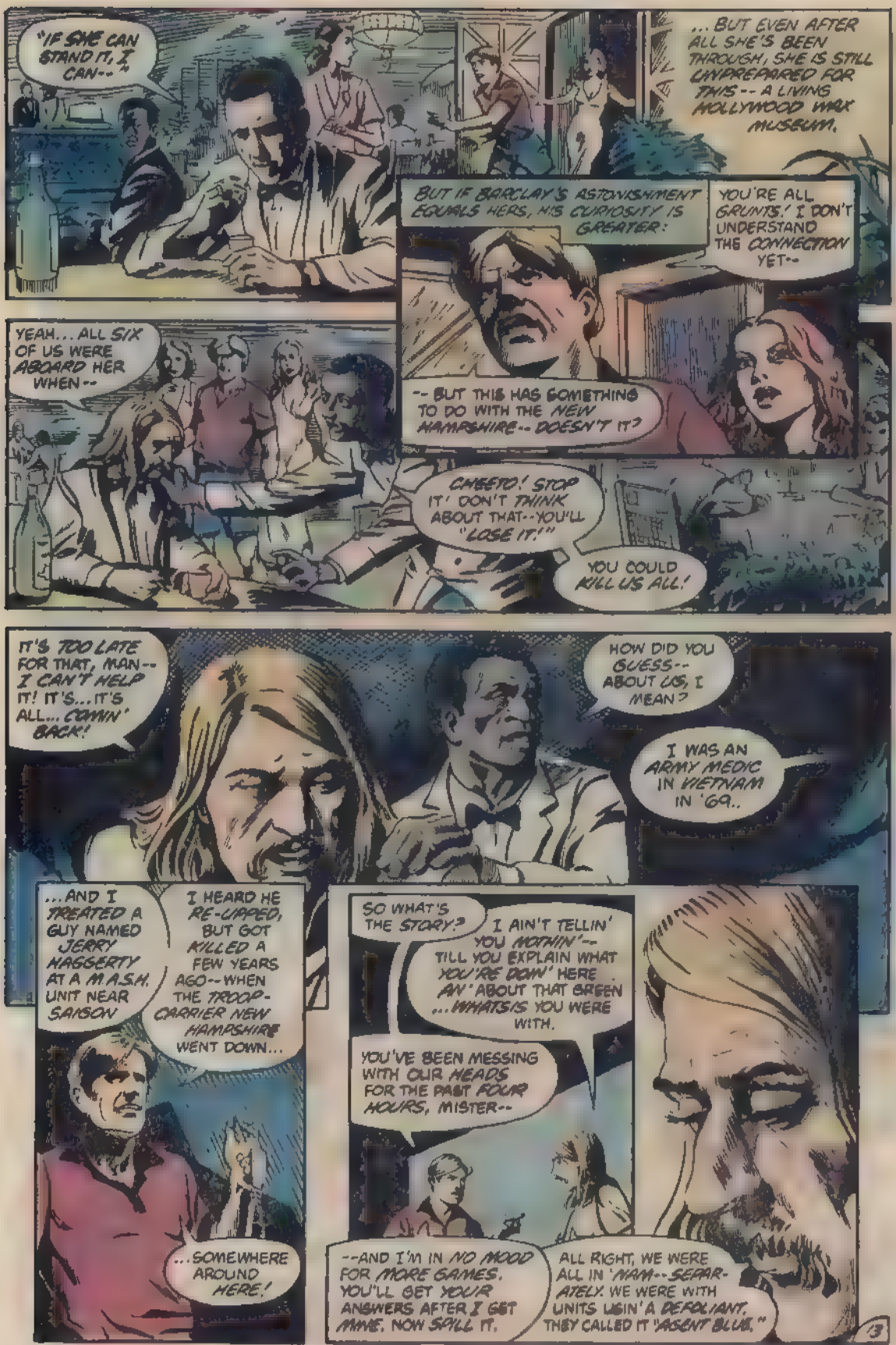
SHE CAN'T -- AND THE "IMPOSSIBILITY" OF WHAT HAPPENS NEXT MAKES HER DOUBLY UNCERTAIN...



...EVEN AS SHE IS REMINDED OF AN OLD SAYING ABOUT THE MOUTHS OF GIFT-HORSES.



SOMEBODY ELSE... IS RESPONSIBLE... THE SAME SOMEBODY... WHO'S PILOTING THIS CHOPPER...!
I ONLY KNOW... I CAN'T TRUST ANYTHING... I SEE OR HEAR... INCLUDING YOU, LIZ . OR WHOEVER YOU ARE...!
LIZ STARES BACK AT THE SWAMP THING. "I KNOW THAT LOOK IN YOUR EYES," SHE SAYS. "YOU'RE NOT SURE ANY-THING'S REAL ANY MORE, EITHER."
'HAGGERTY, J.T.-- CORPORAL." THAT NAME--FAMILIAR.
BUT FROM WHERE? 'NAM? THEN WHY DO I ASSOCIATE IT WITH THE CARIBBEAN?
WAIT--NOW I REMEMBER...
A NEAT TRICK, CHEETO-- THAT 'COPTER THING.
HAD TO GET HER DOWN SOMEHOW.
AN' SINCE THOSE THREE REALLY ARE STRANGERS HERE, I GUESS WE OUGHTA BRING 'EM TOGETHER..
--SO WE CAN FIGURE OUT WHAT TO DO WITH 'EM.
"MEANTIME, LET'S GO GET READY. WE ONLY GOT A COUPLE MINUTES BEFORE WE GOTTA GREET OUR.. 'GUESTS'"
ALEC, LOOK! WE'RE DESCENDING-- TOWARD DENNIS!
OH, NO-- NOT AGAIN--!
NO, DENNIS-- WE'RE NOT ANOTHER HALLUCINATION. I THINK.
FOR ALL I KNOW, I COULD BE TALKING TO MY-SELF RIGHT NOW--
-- BUT I'LL BET WE'RE REAL. IT'S EVERYTHING ELSE THAT'S THE CONTRIVANCE.
HUH?
I DON'T UNDERSTAND IT, EITHER-- BUT ALEC THINKS IT'S A FORM OF MATTER-TRANS-MUTATION--
--AN EXTREMELY SOPHISTICATED POWER THAT CAN TRANSFORM THINGS...
...AND MOVE US ANYWHERE IT WISHES--LIKE...LIKE...
LIKE PAWNS ON A CHESSBOARD!... PLAYTHINGS!
I'D SAY SO. AND IT SEEMS OUR "PLAYMATES" HAVE DECIDED TO SHOW THEMSELVES.
LOOK.
"YOU PLAYED IT FOR HER, YOU CAN PLAY IT FOR ME. PLAY IT."
"WELL, I DON'T THINK I CAN REMEMBER IT--"
ME, I'M TIRED OF "PLAYING"-- SICK OF BEING PLAYED WITH.
AND I'M PUTTING A STOP TO IT!
LIZ FOLLOWS HIM INSIDE...
12
"CONT'D ON 38 PAGE FOLLOWING"

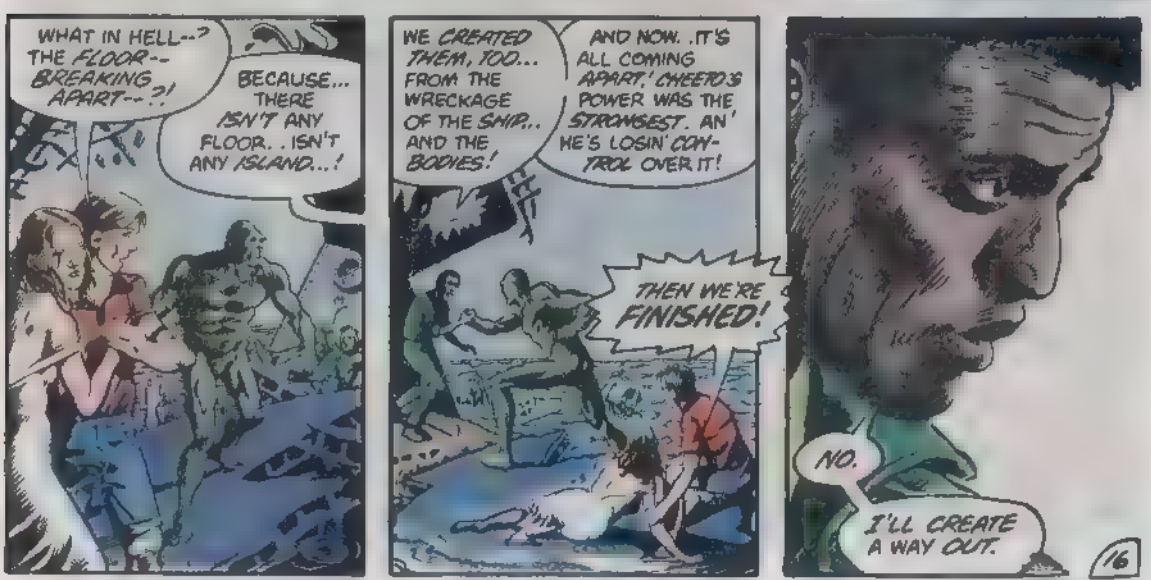

"IF SHE CAN STAND IT, I CAN--"
...BUT EVEN AFTER ALL SHE'S BEEN THROUGH, SHE IS STILL UNPREPARED FOR THIS--A LIVING HOLLYWOOD WAX MUSEUM.
BUT IF BARCLAY'S ASTONISHMENT EQUALS HERS, HIS CURIOSITY IS GREATER:
YOU'RE ALL GRUNTS.' I DON'T UNDERSTAND THE CONNECTION YET--
YEAH... ALL SIX OF US WERE ABOARD HER WHEN--
-- BUT THIS HAS SOMETHING TO DO WITH THE NEW HAMPSHIRE-- DOESN'T IT?
CHEETO! STOP IT! DON'T THINK ABOUT THAT--YOU'LL "LOSE IT!"
YOU COULD KILL US ALL!
IT'S TOO LATE FOR THAT, MAN-- I CAN'T HELP IT! IT'S... IT'S ALL... COMIN' BACK!
HOW DID YOU GUESS-- ABOUT US, I MEAN?
I WAS AN ARMY MEDIC IN VIETNAM IN '69..
...AND I TREATED A GUY NAMED JERRY HAGGERTY AT A M.A.S.H. UNIT NEAR SAIGON
I HEARD HE RE-UPPED, BUT GOT KILLED A FEW YEARS AGO--WHEN THE TROOP-CARRIER NEW HAMPSHIRE WENT DOWN...
...SOMEWHERE AROUND HERE!
SO WHAT'S THE STORY?
I AIN'T TELLIN' YOU NOTHIN'-- TILL YOU EXPLAIN WHAT YOU'RE DOIN' HERE AN' ABOUT THAT GREEN ...WHATSIS YOU WERE WITH.
YOU'VE BEEN MESSING WITH OUR HEADS FOR THE PAST FOUR HOURS, MISTER--
--AND I'M IN NO MOOD FOR MORE GAMES. YOU'LL GET YOUR ANSWERS AFTER I GET MINE. NOW SPILL IT.
ALL RIGHT, WE WERE ALL IN 'NAM--SEPARATELY. WE WERE WITH UNITS USIN' A DEFOLIANT. THEY CALLED IT "AGENT BLUE."
13

'AFTER WE GOT ROTATED OUT AN' SENT HOME, WE ALL HAD THE SAME RE-ADJUSTMENT PROBLEMS YOU KNOW THE STORY..."
GET OUTTA HERE, "GOOK-KILLER"! GO BACK WHERE YA BELONG!
AIN'T NO YELLOW BABIES TO BUTCHER 'ROUND HERE!
ME, I GOT BACK TO DISCOVER WHAT I'D BEEN FIGHTIN' WASN'T "OFFICIALLY" A WAR--
--SO SOME OF THE DISABILITY I WAS COUNTIN' ON FROM THE VETS' ADMINISTRATION JUST WASN'T THERE.
AN' MY OL' LADY SAID I GAVE HER THE CREEPS--
--'CAUSE I SLEPT ON THE EDGE OF THE BED ALL NIGHT, LIKE I WAS LISTENIN' FOR THE V.C.'S SNEAKERS.
"...AN' IF SHE EVEN MOVED, I JUMPED UP THE SCREAMIN' STARTED LATER"
I THINK SHE LIVES IN ENCINO NOW. HER NEW HUSBAND SELLS SWIMMIN' POOLS.
IT WAS LIKE THAT FOR ALL OF US. SO WE RE-UPPED
WHAT ELSE COULD WE DO? IT WAS THE ONLY LIFE WE KNEW HOW TO LIVE.
'BUT BY THEN, THERE D BEEN 'VIETNAMIZATION'. AN' A VOLUNTEER ARMY WITH NOTHIN TO DO
"SOME GUYS SLEPT A LOT. OTHERS STAYED STONED SOME OF US WATCHED MOVIES LOTS OF MOVIES
US SIX GOT TRANSFERRED FROM A BASE IN FLORIDA TO ONE IN PUERTO RICO WE WERE SHIPPED OUT--
--ON THE NEW HAMPSHIRE BUT SHE NEVER MADE IT.
RIGHT-- THAT IS THE PART YOU KNOW
"ME, JUICE, 'REEF,' DICENSO GUTLIN AND FOX WERE THE ONLY ONES THAT SURVIVED-- BECAUSE OF WHAT THAT 'AGENT BLUE' DID TO OUR HEADS.
"SUDDENLY, WE ALL HAD THE POWER TO CREATE STUFF OUTA THIN AIR WHEN WE NEEDED IT-- JUST BY THINKIN' ABOUT IT'"

CHEMICALLY-INDUCED CHANGES IN BRAIN-FUNCTION-- POSSIBLY EVEN TUMORS-- YIELDING PARANORMAL ABILITIES?
MAYBE. I GUESS SO.
SO YOU STAYED HERE--LET PEOPLE BACK HOME THINK YOU WERE DEAD.
...SO YOU COULD USE YOUR POWER TO CREATE A... AN AMUSEMENT PARK BASED ON YOUR FAVORITE MOVIES? A CELLULOID PARADISE!
NOW, THERE'S COURAGE FOR YOU!
HEY, LADY-- YOU WATCH A B-40 ROCKET DUMP YOUR BEST BUDDY'S HEAD IN YOUR LAP WHEN YOU'RE 18 YEARS OLD...
"THEN YOU RUN THROUGH A STRANGE JUNGLE IN CIRCLES, SCREAMIN' 'CAUSE YOU'RE COVERED HEAD-TO-TOE IN BLOOD--
"--AN' YOU DON'T KNOW WHOSE IT IS!
...THEN WATCH YOUR COUNTRY CHANGE ITS MIND AN' SPIT ON YOU!
YOU GO THROUGH THAT--THEN SHOOT OFF YOUR MOUTH!
YOU BELIEVED IN WHAT YOU DID? THEN, DAMMIT, WHAT ARE YOU HIDING FROM?
DON'T STAY HERE --
"GO ON--DO SOMETHIN' YOU THINK IS YOUR DUTY--AN' YOUR COUNTRY SAYS SO, TOO..."
--GO BACK HOME AND STARE DOWN THE PEOPLE WHO SPIT ON YOU! TELL THEM YOU DID WHAT YOU THOUGHT WAS RIGHT!
BUT IF YOU WENT BECAUSE YOU WERE TOLD TO, OR BECAUSE YOU WANTED TO PLAY HERO AND SNAG A COUPLE MEDALS--
--THEN GET HIP, KIDDO:
LIFE ISN'T A JOHN WAYNE MOVIE--AND I'M SORRY, BUT YOU WENT FOR THE WRONG REASONS
SO TRY DOING SOMETHING REALLY HEROIC: TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR OWN LIFE.
GROW UP.
'CAUSE UNTIL YOU DO, YOU AND THIS FANTASY HIDE-OUT ARE NO DIFFERENT FROM THE ONES WHO WENT TO CANADA--
--YOU'RE COPPING OUT, AND I HAVE NO SYMPATHY FOR YOU. 'CAUSE HERE'S ANOTHER HOT FLASH:
THE SYMPATHY YOU HAVE TO ASK FOR ISN'T WORTH HAVING.

WITH NUMBING HORROR, HOLLAND WATCHES THE CAFÉ PATRONS ASSUME THEIR TRUE FORMS. HUMAN REMAINS. SKELETONS.

THE PASSENGERS AND CREW OF THE U.S.S. NEW HAMPSHIRE.


WHAT IN HELL--? THE FLOOR--BREAKING APART--?!
BECAUSE... THERE ISN'T ANY FLOOR.. ISN'T ANY ISLAND...!
WE CREATED THEM, TOO... FROM THE WRECKAGE OF THE SHIP.. AND THE BODIES!
AND NOW..IT'S ALL COMING APART! CHEETO'S POWER WAS THE STRONGEST. AN' HE'S LOSIN' CONTROL OVER IT!
THEN WE'RE FINISHED!
NO.
I'LL CREATE A WAY OUT.

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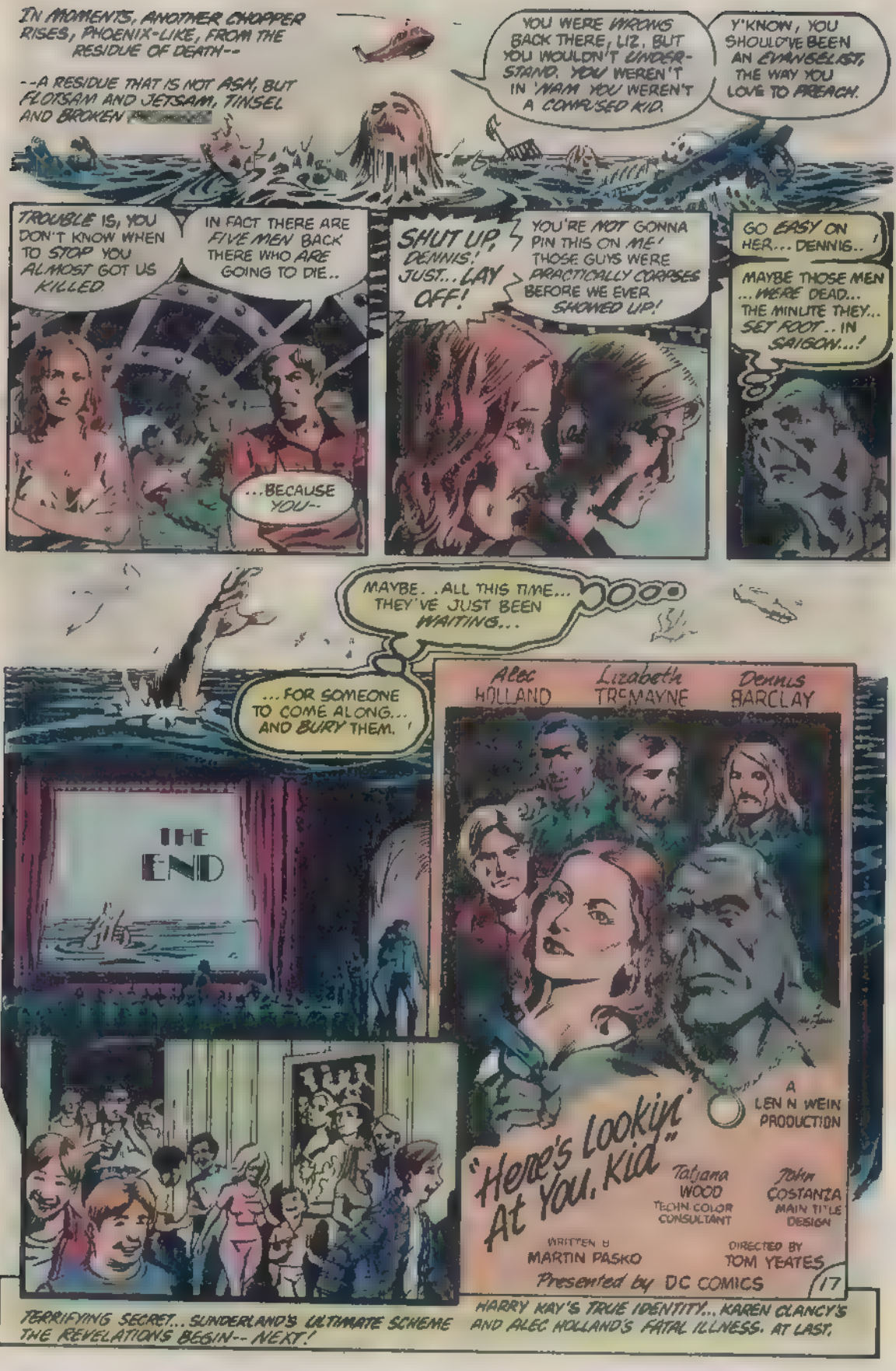
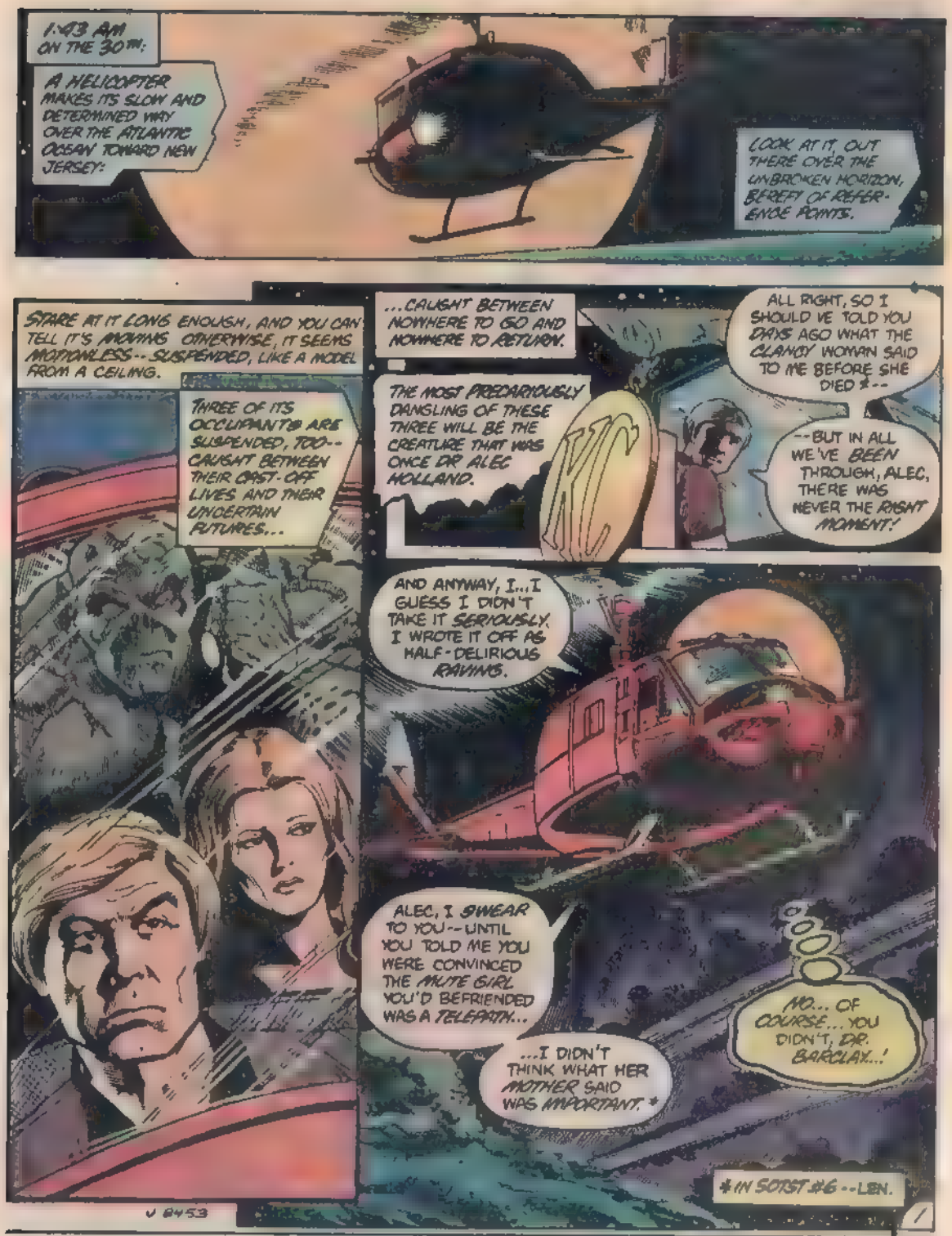

IN MOMENTS, ANOTHER CHOPPER RISES, PHOENIX-LIKE, FROM THE RESIDUE OF DEATH--
--A RESIDUE THAT IS NOT ASH, BUT FLOTSAM AND JETSAM, TINSEL AND BROKEN
YOU WERE WRONG BACK THERE, LIZ. BUT YOU WOULDN'T UNDERSTAND. YOU WEREN'T IN 'NAM YOU WEREN'T A CONFUSED KID.
Y'KNOW, YOU SHOULD'VE BEEN AN EVANGELIST, THE WAY YOU LOVE TO PREACH.
TROUBLE IS, YOU DON'T KNOW WHEN TO STOP YOU ALMOST GOT US KILLED.
IN FACT THERE ARE FIVE MEN BACK THERE WHO ARE GOING TO DIE..
...BECAUSE YOU--
SHUT UP, DENNIS! JUST.. LAY OFF!
YOU'RE NOT GONNA PIN THIS ON ME! THOSE GUYS WERE PRACTICALLY CORPSES BEFORE WE EVER SHOWED UP!
GO EASY ON HER... DENNIS..
MAYBE THOSE MEN ...WERE DEAD... THE MINUTE THEY... SET FOOT.. IN SAIGON...!
MAYBE. . ALL THIS TIME... THEY'VE JUST BEEN WAITING...
... FOR SOMEONE TO COME ALONG... AND BURY THEM.
THE END
Alec HOLLAND
Lizabeth TRENAYNE
Dennis BARCLAY
A LEN N WEIN PRODUCTION
"Here's Lookin' At You, Kid"
Tatjana WOOD TECHN COLOR CONSULTANT
John COSTANZA MAIN TITLE DESIGN
WRITTEN B MARTIN PASKO
DIRECTED BY TOM YEATES
Presented by DC COMICS
17
TERRIFYING SECRET... SUNDERLAND'S ULTIMATE SCHEME THE REVELATIONS BEGIN-- NEXT!
HARRY KAY'S TRUE IDENTITY... KAREN CLANCY'S AND ALEC HOLLAND'S FATAL ILLNESS. AT LAST,

The SAGA of The
SWAMP
THING
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO. 9
JAN.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
YEATES


1:43 AM ON THE 30TH:
A HELICOPTER MAKES ITS SLOW AND DETERMINED WAY OVER THE ATLANTIC OCEAN TOWARD NEW JERSEY:
LOOK AT IT, OUT THERE OVER THE UNBROKEN HORIZON, BEREFT OF REFERENCE POINTS.
STARE AT IT LONG ENOUGH, AND YOU CAN TELL IT'S MOVING. OTHERWISE, IT SEEMS MOTIONLESS -- SUSPENDED, LIKE A MODEL FROM A CEILING.
THREE OF ITS OCCUPANTS* ARE SUSPENDED, TOO -- CAUGHT BETWEEN THEIR CAST-OFF LIVES AND THEIR UNCERTAIN FUTURES...
...CAUGHT BETWEEN NOWHERE TO GO AND NOWHERE TO RETURN.
THE MOST PRECARIOUSLY DANGLING OF THESE THREE WILL BE THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND.
ALL RIGHT, SO I SHOULD'VE TOLD YOU DAYS AGO WHAT THE CLANCY WOMAN SAID TO ME BEFORE SHE DIED *--
--BUT IN ALL WE'VE BEEN THROUGH, ALEC, THERE WAS NEVER THE RIGHT MOMENT!
AND ANYWAY, I...I GUESS I DIDN'T TAKE IT SERIOUSLY. I WROTE IT OFF AS HALF-DELIRIOUS RAVING.
ALEC, I SWEAR TO YOU -- UNTIL YOU TOLD ME YOU WERE CONVINCED THE MUTE GIRL YOU'D BEFRIENDED WAS A TELEPATH...
...I DIDN'T THINK WHAT HER MOTHER SAID WAS IMPORTANT.
NO... OF COURSE... YOU DIDN'T, DR. BARCLAY...!
* IN SOTST #6 -- LEN.
J 8453

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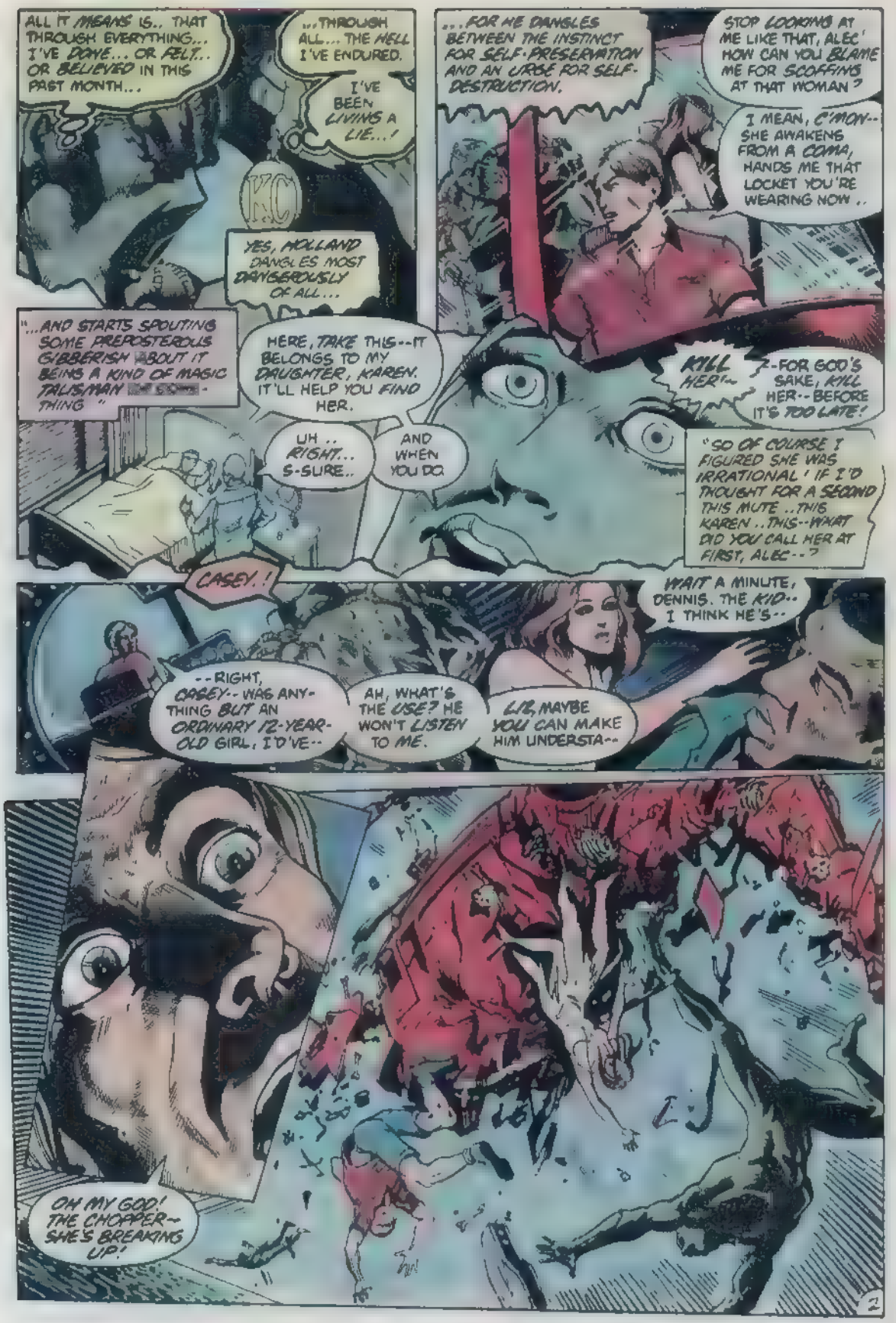
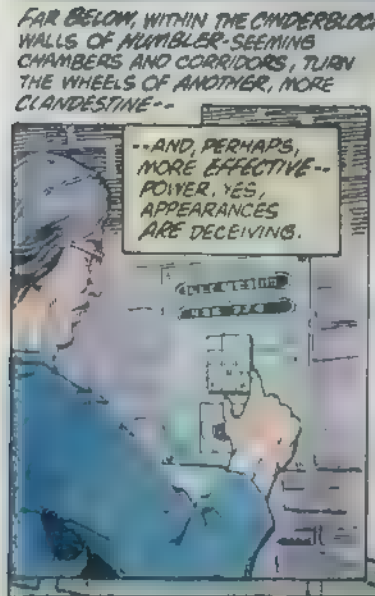
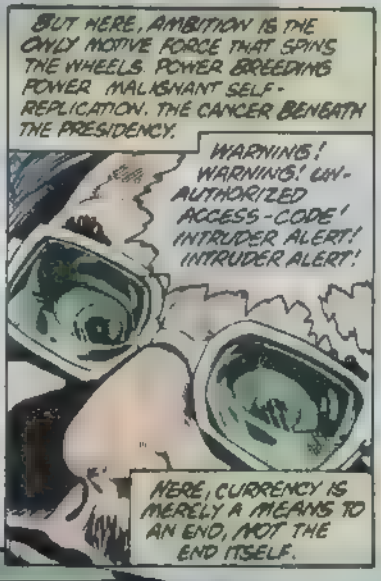
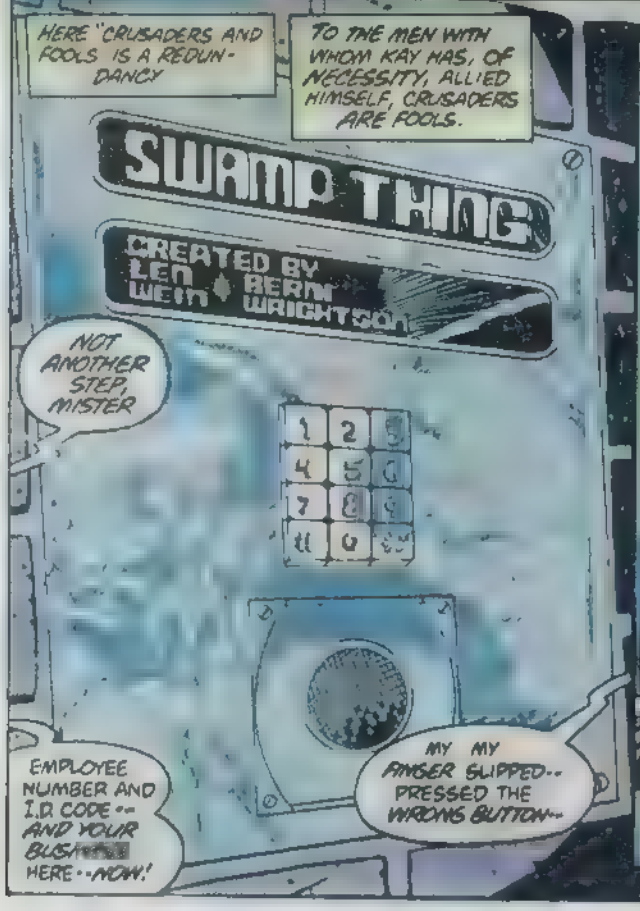

ALL IT MEANS IS.. THAT THROUGH EVERYTHING... I'VE DONE... OR FELT.. OR BELIEVED IN THIS PAST MONTH...
...THROUGH ALL... THE HELL I'VE ENDURED.
I'VE BEEN LIVING A LIE...!
YES, HOLLAND DANGLES MOST DANGEROUSLY OF ALL...
"...AND STARTS SPOUTING SOME PREPOSTEROUS GIBBERISH ABOUT IT BEING A KIND OF MAGIC TALISMAN [illegible] - THING "
HERE, TAKE THIS--IT BELONGS TO MY DAUGHTER, KAREN. IT'LL HELP YOU FIND HER.
UH .. RIGHT... S-SURE..
AND WHEN YOU DO
...FOR HE DANGLES BETWEEN THE INSTINCT FOR SELF-PRESERVATION AND AN URGE FOR SELF-DESTRUCTION.
STOP LOOKING AT ME LIKE THAT, ALEC! HOW CAN YOU BLAME ME FOR SCOFFING AT THAT WOMAN?
I MEAN, C'MON-- SHE AWAKENS FROM A COMA, HANDS ME THAT LOCKET YOU'RE WEARING NOW ..
KILL HER!--
-FOR GOD'S SAKE, KILL HER--BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
"SO OF COURSE I FIGURED SHE WAS IRRATIONAL' IF I'D THOUGHT FOR A SECOND THIS MUTE ..THIS KAREN ..THIS--WHAT DID YOU CALL HER AT FIRST, ALEC--?
CASEY.!
WAIT A MINUTE, DENNIS. THE KID.. I THINK HE'S--
--RIGHT, CASEY-- WAS ANY-THING BUT AN ORDINARY 12-YEAR-OLD GIRL, I'D'VE--
AH, WHAT'S THE USE? HE WON'T LISTEN TO ME.
LIZ, MAYBE YOU CAN MAKE HIM UNDERSTA--
OH MY GOD! THE CHOPPER-- SHE'S BREAKING UP!

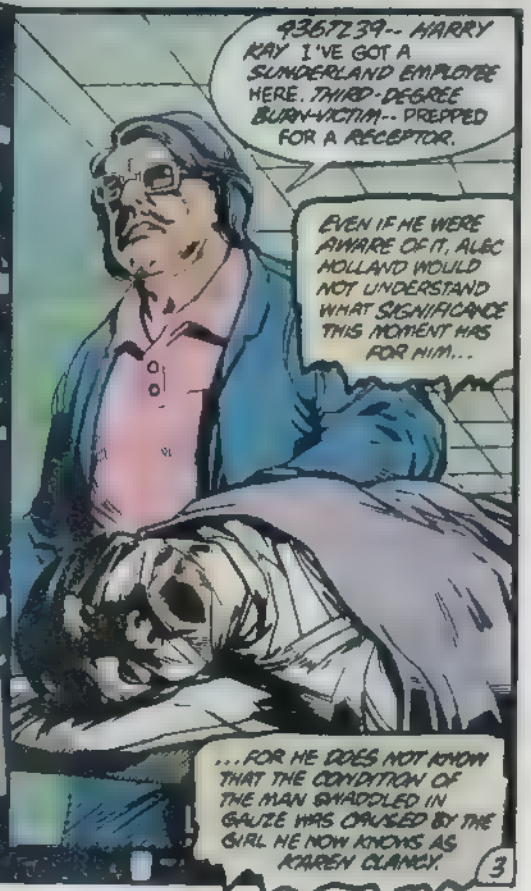
9:45 A.M.--
WASHINGTON, D.C.
WITHIN ITS CHAMBERS AND CORRIDORS TURN THE WHEELS OF POWER THAT STEER THE REPUBLIC...
...WHEELS GREASED MORE BY CURRENCY AND CUPIDITY THAN BY THE CONVICTIONS INSCRIBED ON ITS GLEAMING MARBLE WALLS.

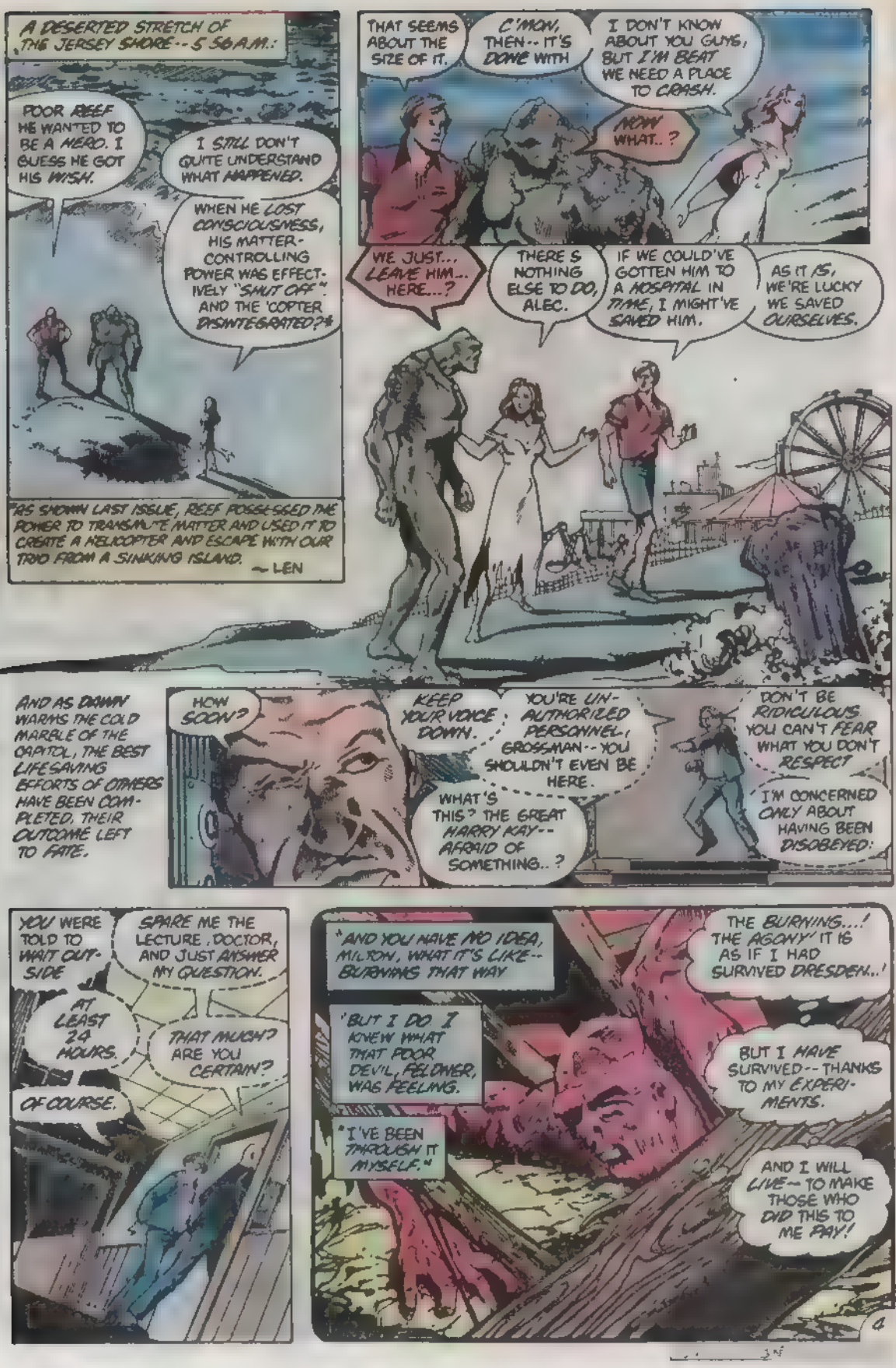

FAR BELOW, WITHIN THE CINDERBLOCK WALLS OF NUMBLER-SEEMING CHAMBERS AND CORRIDORS, TURN THE WHEELS OF ANOTHER, MORE CLANDESTINE--
--AND, PERHAPS, MORE EFFECTIVE-- POWER. YES, APPEARANCES ARE DECEIVING.

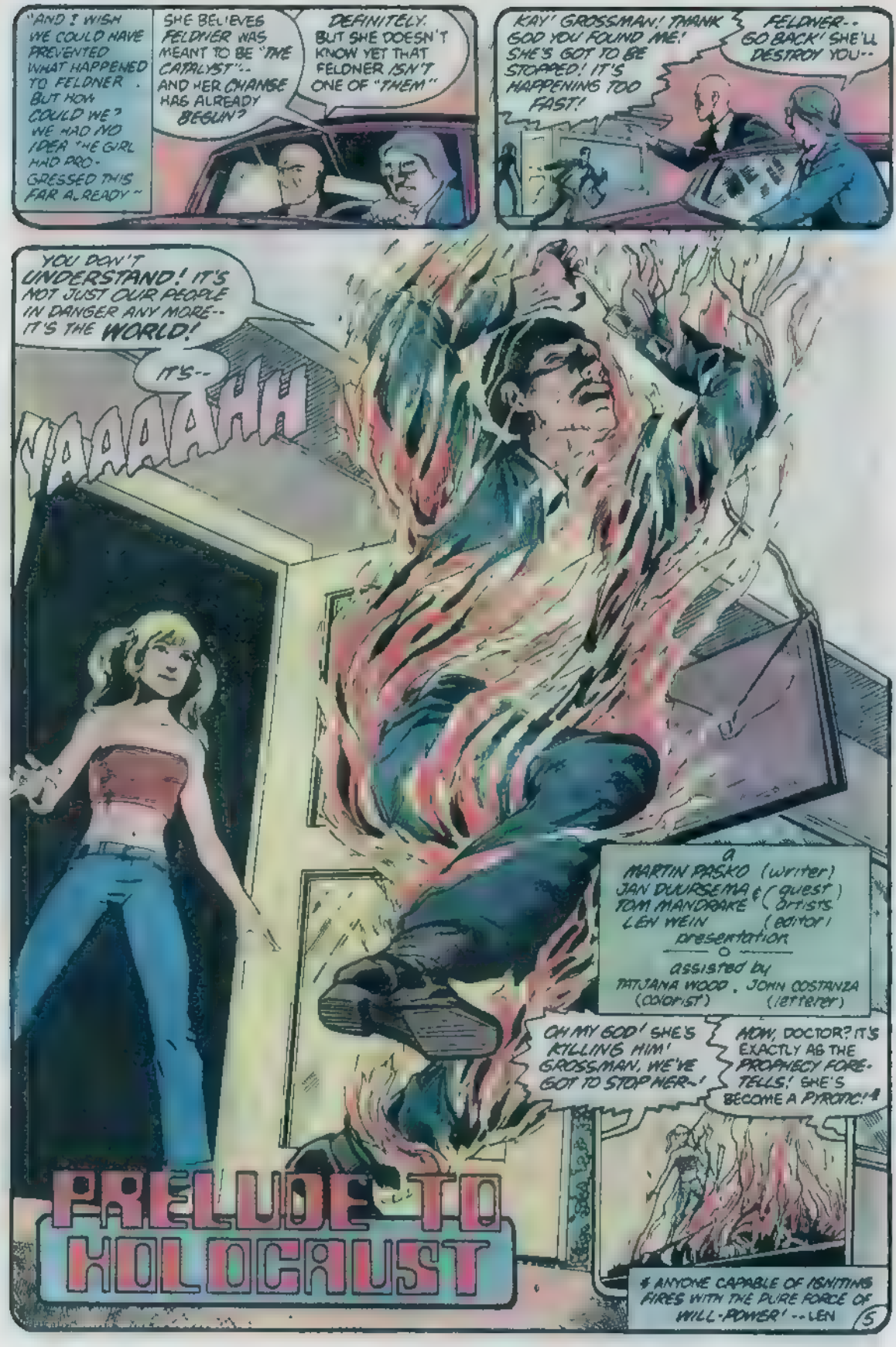

BUT HERE, AMBITION IS THE ONLY MOTIVE FORCE THAT SPINS THE WHEELS. POWER BREEDING POWER MALIGNANT SELF-REPLICATION. THE CANCER BENEATH THE PRESIDENCY.
WARNING! WARNING! UN-AUTHORIZED ACCESS-CODE! INTRUDER ALERT! INTRUDER ALERT!
HERE, CURRENCY IS MERELY A MEANS TO AN END, NOT THE END ITSELF.

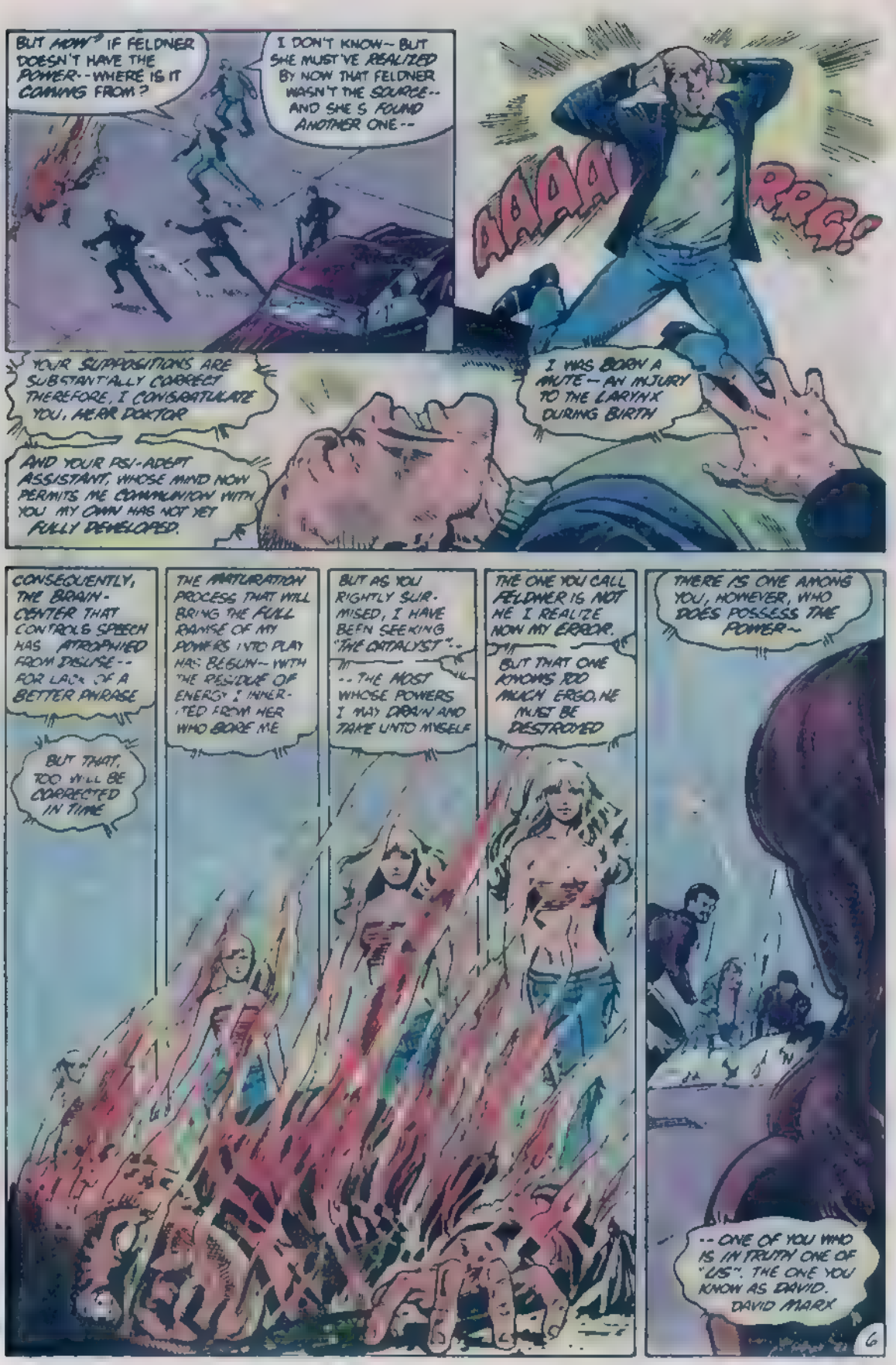
AND CONVICTIONS ARE STRICTLY THE PROVINCE OF CRUSADERS AND FOOLS.
CRUSADERS AND FOOLS..
THE THOUGHT COMES TO DR HARRY KAY'S LIPS LIKE BILE, A DISTASTEFUL THING TO BE SPAT OUT. BITTER WINE TO A VINTNER.

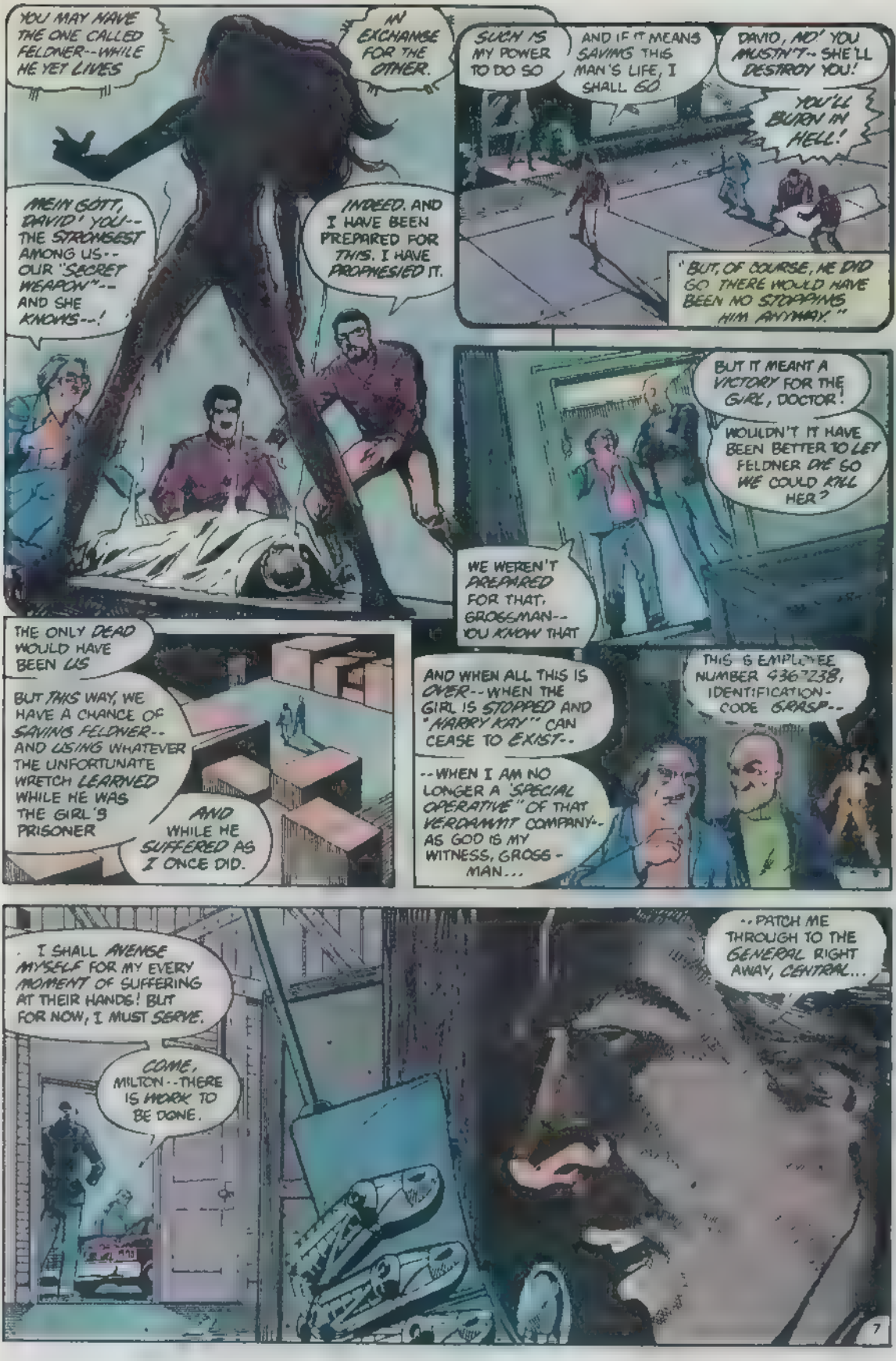

HERE "CRUSADERS AND FOOLS" IS A REDUNDANCY
TO THE MEN WITH WHOM KAY HAS, OF NECESSITY, ALLIED HIMSELF, CRUSADERS ARE FOOLS.
SWAMP THING
CREATED BY LEN WEIN & BERNI WRIGHTSON
NOT ANOTHER STEP, MISTER
EMPLOYEE NUMBER AND I.D. CODE-- AND YOUR BUSINESS HERE--NOW!
MY MY FINGER SLIPPED-- PRESSED THE WRONG BUTTON--

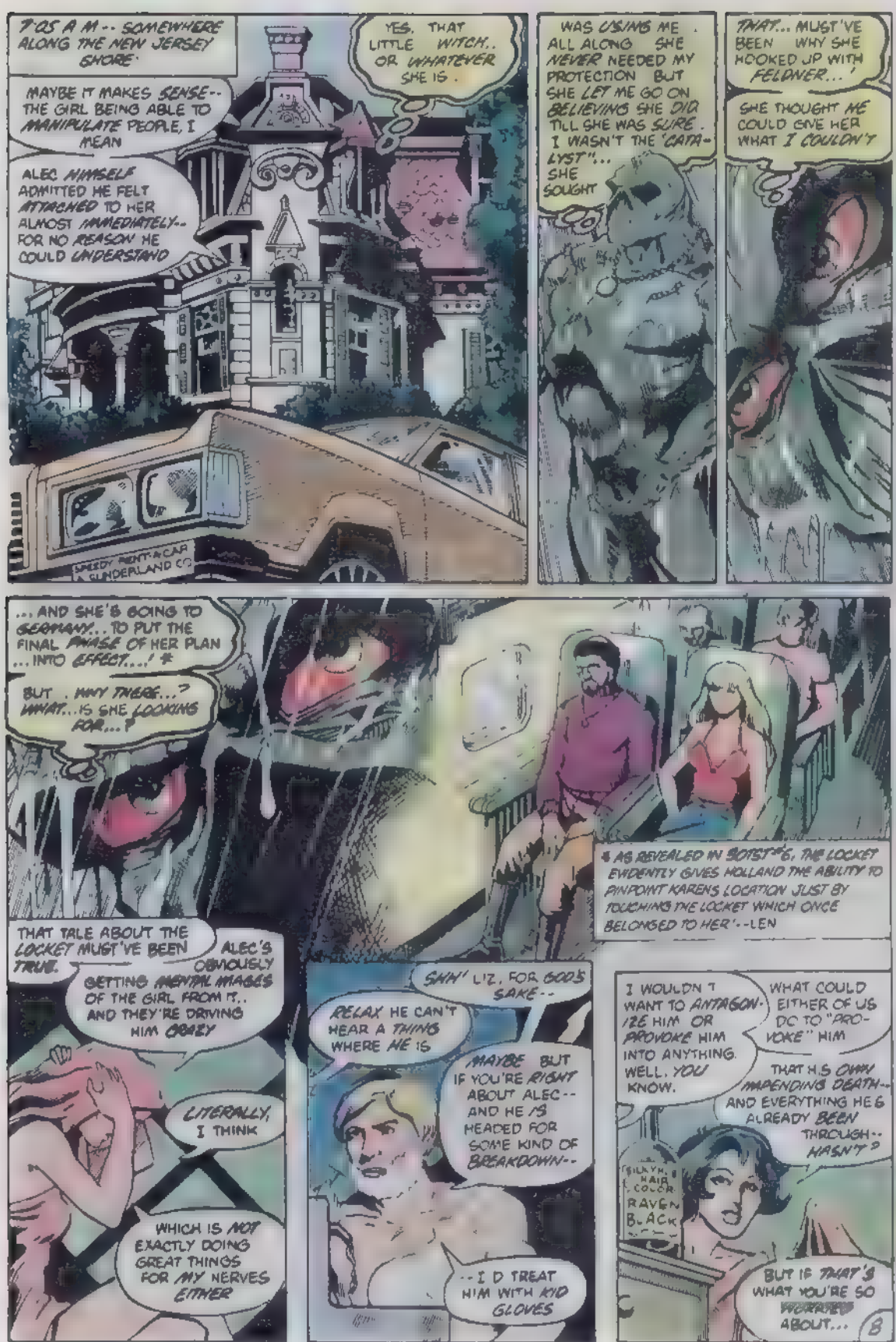

9367239-- HARRY KAY I'VE GOT A SUNDERLAND EMPLOYEE HERE. THIRD-DEGREE BURN-VICTIM-- PREPPED FOR A RECEPTOR.
EVEN IF HE WERE AWARE OF IT, ALEC HOLLAND WOULD NOT UNDERSTAND WHAT SIGNIFICANCE THIS MOMENT HAS FOR HIM...
...FOR HE DOES NOT KNOW THAT THE CONDITION OF THE MAN SWADDLED IN GAUZE WAS CAUSED BY THE GIRL HE NOW KNOWS AS KAREN CLANCY.
3

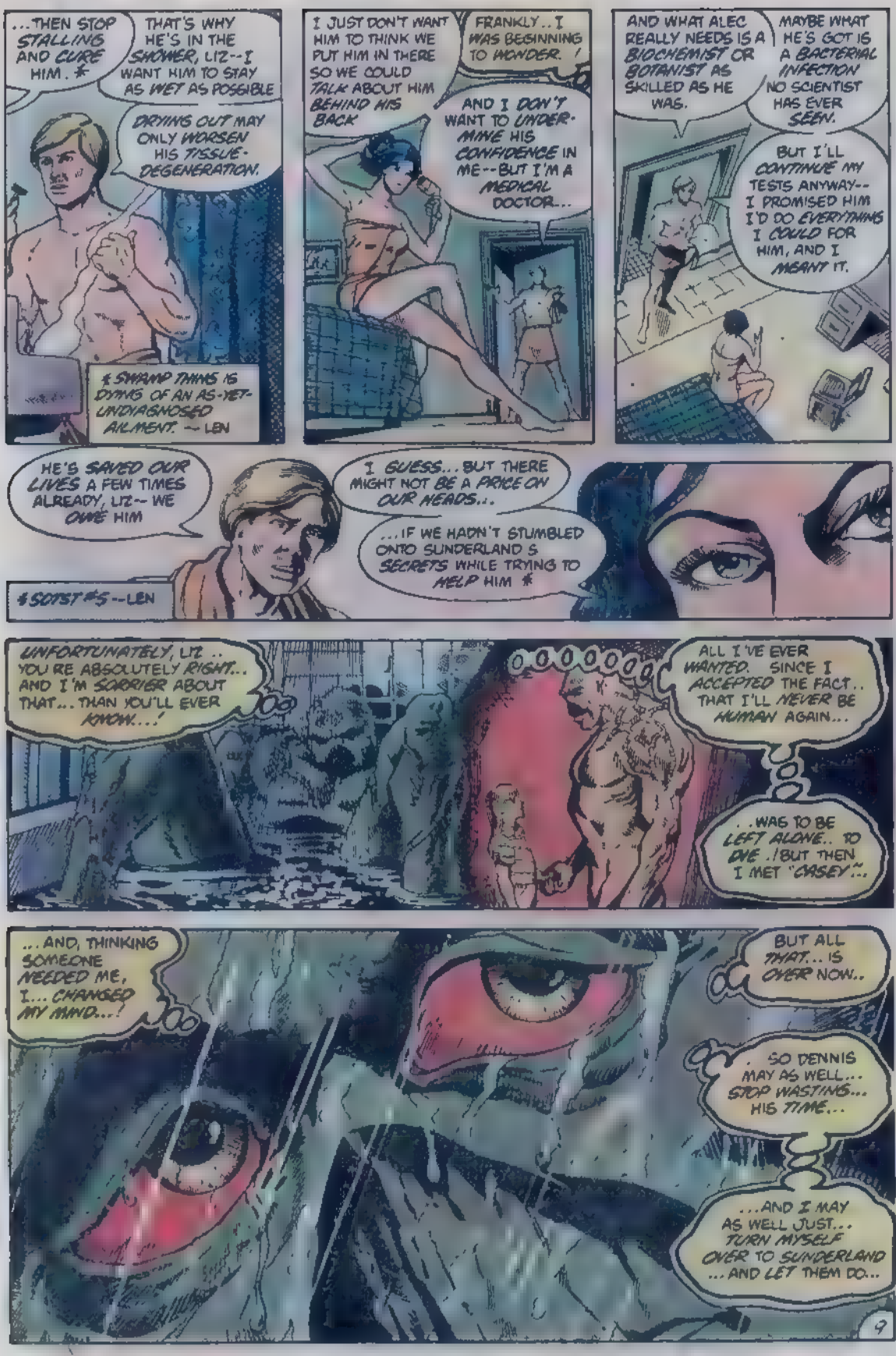

A DESERTED STRETCH OF THE JERSEY SHORE--5:50 A.M.:
POOR REEF HE WANTED TO BE A HERO. I GUESS HE GOT HIS WISH.
I STILL DON'T QUITE UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED.
WHEN HE LOST CONSCIOUSNESS, HIS MATTER-CONTROLLING POWER WAS EFFECTIVELY "SHUT OFF". AND THE 'COPTER DISINTEGRATED?
AS SHOWN LAST ISSUE, REEF POSSESSED THE POWER TO TRANSMUTE MATTER AND USED IT TO CREATE A HELICOPTER AND ESCAPE WITH OUR TRIO FROM A SINKING ISLAND. ~LEN
THAT SEEMS ABOUT THE SIZE OF IT.
C'MON, THEN-- IT'S DONE WITH
I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YOU GUYS, BUT I'M BEAT WE NEED A PLACE TO CRASH.
NOW WHAT..?
WE JUST... LEAVE HIM... HERE...?
THERE'S NOTHING ELSE TO DO, ALEC.
IF WE COULD'VE GOTTEN HIM TO A HOSPITAL IN TIME, I MIGHT'VE SAVED HIM.
AS IT IS, WE'RE LUCKY WE SAVED OURSELVES.
AND AS DAWN WARMS THE COLD MARBLE OF THE CAPITOL, THE BEST LIFE-SAVING EFFORTS OF OTHERS HAVE BEEN COMPLETED, THEIR OUTCOME LEFT TO FATE.
HOW SOON?
KEEP YOUR VOICE DOWN.
YOU'RE UNAUTHORIZED PERSONNEL, GROSSMAN-- YOU SHOULDN'T EVEN BE HERE.
WHAT'S THIS? THE GREAT HARRY KAY-- AFRAID OF SOMETHING..?
DON'T BE RIDICULOUS. YOU CAN'T FEAR WHAT YOU DON'T RESPECT
I'M CONCERNED ONLY ABOUT HAVING BEEN DISOBEYED!
YOU WERE TOLD TO WAIT OUTSIDE
SPARE ME THE LECTURE, DOCTOR, AND JUST ANSWER MY QUESTION.
AT LEAST 24 HOURS.
THAT MUCH? ARE YOU CERTAIN?
OF COURSE.
"AND YOU HAVE NO IDEA, MILTON, WHAT IT'S LIKE-- BURNING THAT WAY
"BUT I DO. I KNEW WHAT THAT POOR DEVIL, FELDNER, WAS FEELING.
"I'VE BEEN THROUGH IT MYSELF."
THE BURNING...! THE AGONY! IT IS AS IF I HAD SURVIVED DRESDEN..!
BUT I HAVE SURVIVED-- THANKS TO MY EXPERIMENTS.
AND I WILL LIVE-- TO MAKE THOSE WHO DID THIS TO ME PAY!

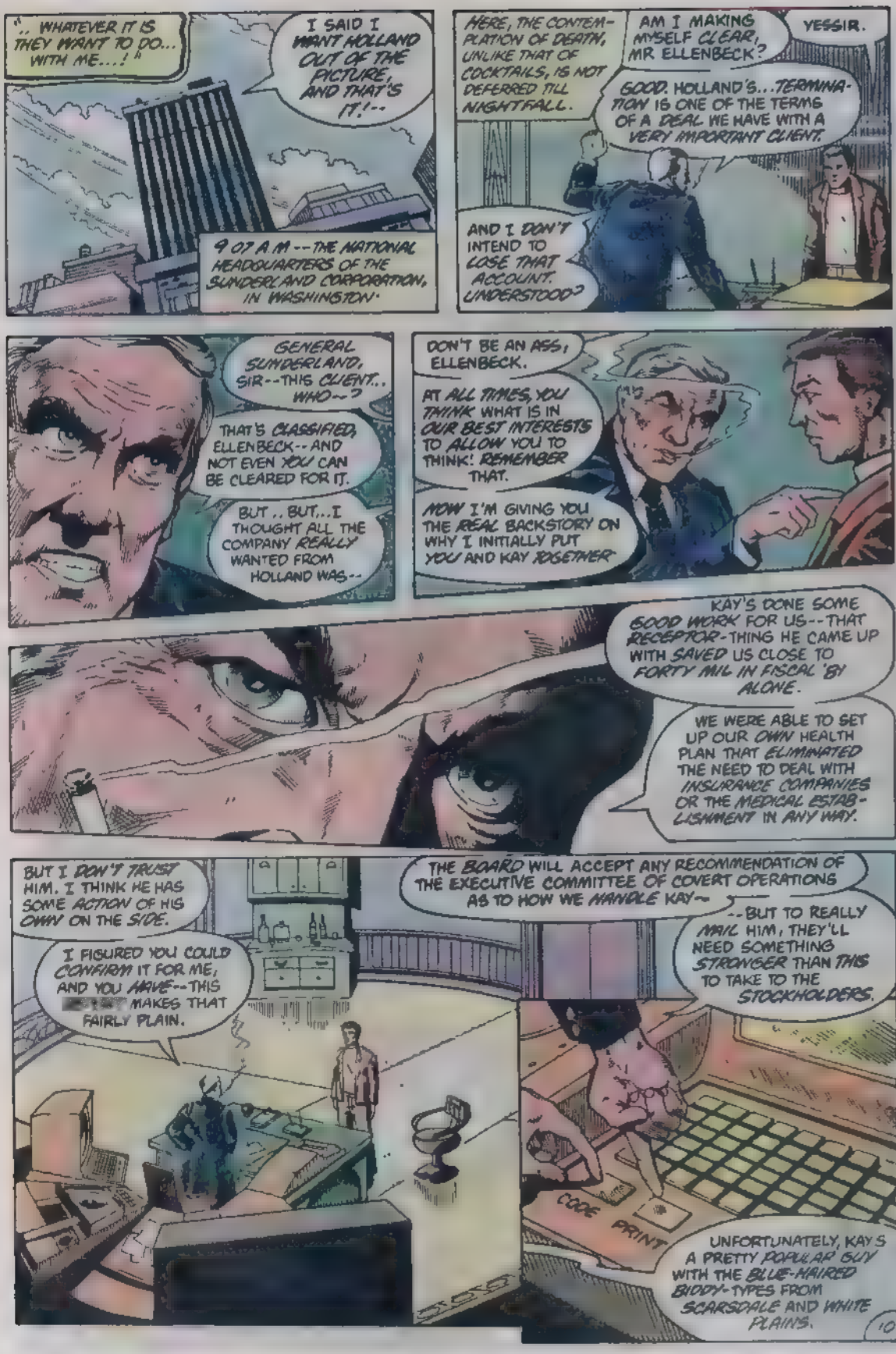

"AND I WISH WE COULD HAVE PREVENTED WHAT HAPPENED TO FELDNER . BUT HOW COULD WE? WE HAD NO IDEA THE GIRL HAD PROGRESSED THIS FAR ALREADY"
SHE BELIEVES FELDNER WAS MEANT TO BE "THE CATALYST"-- AND HER CHANGE HAS ALREADY BEGUN?
DEFINITELY. BUT SHE DOESN'T KNOW YET THAT FELDNER ISN'T ONE OF "THEM"
KAY! GROSSMAN! THANK GOD YOU FOUND ME! SHE'S GOT TO BE STOPPED! IT'S HAPPENING TOO FAST!
FELDNER-- GO BACK! SHE'LL DESTROY YOU--
YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND! IT'S NOT JUST OUR PEOPLE IN DANGER ANY MORE-- IT'S THE WORLD!
IT'S--
YAAAAAHH
a MARTIN PASKO (writer) JAN DUURSEMA & TOM MANDRAKE (guest artists) LEN WEIN (editor) presentation
assisted by TATJANA WOOD (colorist) . JOHN COSTANZA (letterer)
OH MY GOD! SHE'S KILLING HIM! GROSSMAN, WE'VE GOT TO STOP HER--!
WOW, DOCTOR? IT'S EXACTLY AS THE PROPHECY FORETELLS! SHE'S BECOME A PYROTIC!*
PRELUDE TO HOLOCAUST
* ANYONE CAPABLE OF IGNITING FIRES WITH THE PURE FORCE OF WILL-POWER' --LEN
5


BUT HOW? IF FELDNER DOESN'T HAVE THE POWER--WHERE IS IT COMING FROM?
I DON'T KNOW-- BUT SHE MUST'VE REALIZED BY NOW THAT FELDNER WASN'T THE SOURCE-- AND SHE'S FOUND ANOTHER ONE--
AAAAA
RRRG!
YOUR SUPPOSITIONS ARE SUBSTANTIALLY CORRECT THEREFORE, I CONGRATULATE YOU, MEAR DOKTOR
I WAS BORN A MUTE--AN INJURY TO THE LARYNX DURING BIRTH
AND YOUR PSI-ADEPT ASSISTANT, WHOSE MIND NOW PERMITS ME COMMUNION WITH YOU MY OWN HAS NOT YET FULLY DEVELOPED.
CONSEQUENTLY, THE BRAIN-CENTER THAT CONTROLS SPEECH HAS ATROPHIED FROM DISUSE-- FOR LACK OF A BETTER PHRASE
BUT THAT, TOO WILL BE CORRECTED IN TIME
THE MATURATION PROCESS THAT WILL BRING THE FULL PROMISE OF MY POWERS INTO PLAY HAS BEGUN-- WITH THE RESIDUE OF ENERGY I INHERITED FROM HER WHO BORE ME
BUT AS YOU RIGHTLY SURMISED, I HAVE BEEN SEEKING "THE CATALYST"..
-- THE MOST WHOSE POWERS I MAY DRAIN AND TAKE UNTO MYSELF
THE ONE YOU CALL FELDNER IS NOT ME I REALIZE NOW MY ERROR.
BUT THAT ONE KNOWS TOO MUCH ERGO, HE MUST BE DESTROYED
THERE IS ONE AMONG YOU, HOWEVER, WHO DOES POSSESS THE POWER--
-- ONE OF YOU WHO IS IN TRUTH ONE OF "US". THE ONE YOU KNOW AS DAVID. DAVID MARX
6


YOU MAY HAVE THE ONE CALLED FELDNER--WHILE HE YET LIVES
IN EXCHANGE FOR THE OTHER.
MEIN GOTT, DAVID! YOU--THE STRONGEST AMONG US--OUR "SECRET WEAPON"--AND SHE KNOWS--!
INDEED. AND I HAVE BEEN PREPARED FOR THIS. I HAVE PROPHESIED IT.
SUCH IS MY POWER TO DO SO
AND IF IT MEANS SAVING THIS MAN'S LIFE, I SHALL GO
DAVID, NO! YOU MUSTN'T--SHE'LL DESTROY YOU!
YOU'LL BURN IN HELL!
"BUT, OF COURSE, HE DID GO. THERE WOULD HAVE BEEN NO STOPPING HIM ANYWAY."
BUT IT MEANT A VICTORY FOR THE GIRL, DOCTOR!
WOULDN'T IT HAVE BEEN BETTER TO LET FELDNER DIE SO WE COULD KILL HER?
WE WEREN'T PREPARED FOR THAT, GROSSMAN--YOU KNOW THAT
THE ONLY DEAD WOULD HAVE BEEN US
BUT THIS WAY, WE HAVE A CHANCE OF SAVING FELDNER--AND USING WHATEVER THE UNFORTUNATE WRETCH LEARNED WHILE HE WAS THE GIRL'S PRISONER
AND WHILE HE SUFFERED AS I ONCE DID.
AND WHEN ALL THIS IS OVER--WHEN THE GIRL IS STOPPED AND "HARRY KAY" CAN CEASE TO EXIST--
--WHEN I AM NO LONGER A "SPECIAL OPERATIVE" OF THAT VERDAMMT COMPANY--AS GOD IS MY WITNESS, GROSSMAN...
THIS IS EMPLOYEE NUMBER 436-238, IDENTIFICATION-CODE GRASP--
I SHALL AVENGE MYSELF FOR MY EVERY MOMENT OF SUFFERING AT THEIR HANDS! BUT FOR NOW, I MUST SERVE.
COME, MILTON--THERE IS WORK TO BE DONE.
--PATCH ME THROUGH TO THE GENERAL RIGHT AWAY, CENTRAL...


7:05 A.M. -- SOMEWHERE ALONG THE NEW JERSEY SHORE
MAYBE IT MAKES SENSE -- THE GIRL BEING ABLE TO MANIPULATE PEOPLE, I MEAN
ALEC HIMSELF ADMITTED HE FELT ATTACHED TO HER ALMOST IMMEDIATELY -- FOR NO REASON HE COULD UNDERSTAND
YES. THAT LITTLE WITCH, OR WHATEVER SHE IS.
SPEEDY RENT-A-CAR SUNDERLAND CO
WAS USING ME ALL ALONG SHE NEVER NEEDED MY PROTECTION BUT SHE LET ME GO ON BELIEVING SHE DID TILL SHE WAS SURE. I WASN'T THE 'CATALYST'... SHE SOUGHT
THAT... MUST'VE BEEN WHY SHE HOOKED UP WITH FELDNER...'
SHE THOUGHT ME COULD GIVE HER WHAT I COULDN'T
...AND SHE'S GOING TO GERMANY... TO PUT THE FINAL PHASE OF HER PLAN ...INTO EFFECT...! #
BUT. WHY THERE...? WHAT...IS SHE LOOKING FOR...?
AS REVEALED IN SOTST #6, THE LOCKET EVIDENTLY GIVES HOLLAND THE ABILITY TO PINPOINT KAREN'S LOCATION JUST BY TOUCHING THE LOCKET WHICH ONCE BELONGED TO HER' --LEN
THAT TALE ABOUT THE LOCKET MUST'VE BEEN TRUE.
ALEC'S OBVIOUSLY GETTING MENTAL IMAGES OF THE GIRL FROM IT.. AND THEY'RE DRIVING HIM CRAZY
LITERALLY, I THINK
WHICH IS NOT EXACTLY DOING GREAT THINGS FOR MY NERVES EITHER
SHH! LIZ, FOR GOD'S SAKE --
RELAX HE CAN'T HEAR A THING WHERE HE IS
MAYBE BUT IF YOU'RE RIGHT ABOUT ALEC -- AND HE IS HEADED FOR SOME KIND OF BREAKDOWN --
-- I'D TREAT HIM WITH KID GLOVES
I WOULDN'T WANT TO ANTAGONIZE HIM OR PROVOKE HIM INTO ANYTHING. WELL, YOU KNOW.
WHAT COULD EITHER OF US DO TO "PROVOKE" HIM
THAT HIS OWN IMPENDING DEATH -- AND EVERYTHING HE'S ALREADY BEEN THROUGH -- HASN'T?
SILKY, H HAIR COLOR RAVEN BLACK
BUT IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'RE SO WORRIED ABOUT...
8

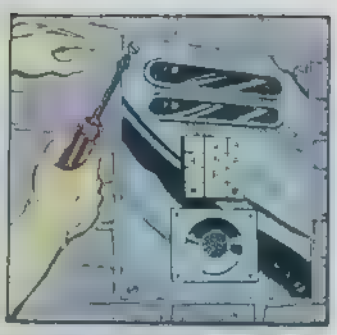

...THEN STOP STALLING AND CURE HIM. *
THAT'S WHY HE'S IN THE SHOWER, LIZ--I WANT HIM TO STAY AS WET AS POSSIBLE
DRYING OUT MAY ONLY WORSEN HIS TISSUE-DEGENERATION.
* SWAMP THING IS DYING OF AN AS-YET-UNDIAGNOSED AILMENT. -- LEN
I JUST DON'T WANT HIM TO THINK WE PUT HIM IN THERE SO WE COULD TALK ABOUT HIM BEHIND HIS BACK
FRANKLY.. I WAS BEGINNING TO WONDER. /
AND I DON'T WANT TO UNDER-MINE HIS CONFIDENCE IN ME--BUT I'M A MEDICAL DOCTOR...
AND WHAT ALEC REALLY NEEDS IS A BIOCHEMIST OR BOTANIST AS SKILLED AS HE WAS.
MAYBE WHAT HE'S GOT IS A BACTERIAL INFECTION NO SCIENTIST HAS EVER SEEN.
BUT I'LL CONTINUE MY TESTS ANYWAY-- I PROMISED HIM I'D DO EVERYTHING I COULD FOR HIM, AND I MEANT IT.
HE'S SAVED OUR LIVES A FEW TIMES ALREADY, LIZ-- WE OWE HIM
I GUESS... BUT THERE MIGHT NOT BE A PRICE ON OUR HEADS...
...IF WE HADN'T STUMBLED ONTO SUNDERLAND S SECRETS WHILE TRYING TO HELP HIM *
* SOTST #5 --LEN
UNFORTUNATELY, LIZ .. YOU RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT... AND I'M SORRIER ABOUT THAT... THAN YOU'LL EVER KNOW...'
ALL I'VE EVER WANTED. SINCE I ACCEPTED THE FACT.. THAT I'LL NEVER BE HUMAN AGAIN...
..WAS TO BE LEFT ALONE.. TO DIE ./BUT THEN I MET "CASEY"...
...AND, THINKING SOMEONE NEEDED ME, I... CHANGED MY MIND...!
BUT ALL THAT... IS OVER NOW..
. SO DENNIS MAY AS WELL... STOP WASTING... HIS TIME...
...AND I MAY AS WELL JUST... TURN MYSELF OVER TO SUNDERLAND ...AND LET THEM DO...
9

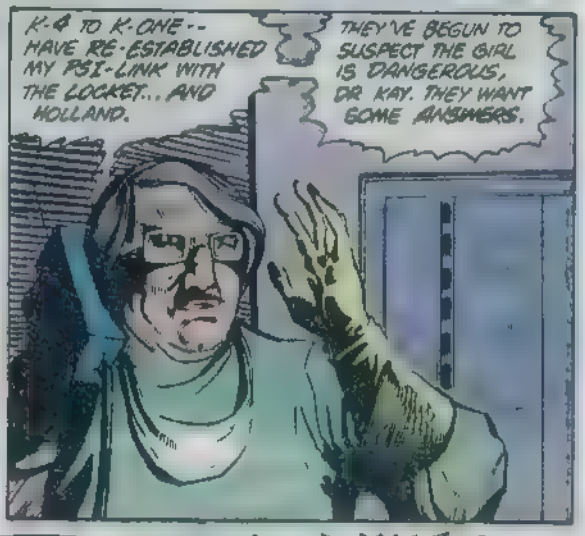

.. WHATEVER IT IS THEY WANT TO DO... WITH ME...!"
I SAID I WANT HOLLAND OUT OF THE PICTURE, AND THAT'S IT!--
9 07 A.M -- THE NATIONAL HEADQUARTERS OF THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION, IN WASHINGTON.
HERE, THE CONTEMPLATION OF DEATH, UNLIKE THAT OF COCKTAILS, IS NOT DEFERRED TILL NIGHTFALL.
AM I MAKING MYSELF CLEAR, MR ELLENBECK?
YESSIR.
GOOD. HOLLAND'S...TERMINATION IS ONE OF THE TERMS OF A DEAL WE HAVE WITH A VERY IMPORTANT CLIENT.
AND I DON'T INTEND TO LOSE THAT ACCOUNT. UNDERSTOOD?
GENERAL SUNDERLAND, SIR--THIS CLIENT.. WHO--?
THAT'S CLASSIFIED, ELLENBECK--AND NOT EVEN YOU CAN BE CLEARED FOR IT.
BUT .. BUT...I THOUGHT ALL THE COMPANY REALLY WANTED FROM HOLLAND WAS--
DON'T BE AN ASS, ELLENBECK.
AT ALL TIMES, YOU THINK WHAT IS IN OUR BEST INTERESTS TO ALLOW YOU TO THINK! REMEMBER THAT.
NOW I'M GIVING YOU THE REAL BACKSTORY ON WHY I INITIALLY PUT YOU AND KAY TOGETHER
KAY'S DONE SOME GOOD WORK FOR US--THAT RECEPTOR-THING HE CAME UP WITH SAVED US CLOSE TO FORTY MIL IN FISCAL '81 ALONE.
WE WERE ABLE TO SET UP OUR OWN HEALTH PLAN THAT ELIMINATED THE NEED TO DEAL WITH INSURANCE COMPANIES OR THE MEDICAL ESTABLISHMENT IN ANY WAY.
BUT I DON'T TRUST HIM. I THINK HE HAS SOME ACTION OF HIS OWN ON THE SIDE.
I FIGURED YOU COULD CONFIRM IT FOR ME, AND YOU HAVE--THIS [redacted] MAKES THAT FAIRLY PLAIN.
THE BOARD WILL ACCEPT ANY RECOMMENDATION OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF COVERT OPERATIONS AS TO HOW WE HANDLE KAY--
--BUT TO REALLY NAIL HIM, THEY'LL NEED SOMETHING STRONGER THAN THIS TO TAKE TO THE STOCKHOLDERS.
CODE PRINT
UNFORTUNATELY, KAY'S A PRETTY POPULAR GUY WITH THE BLUE-HAIRED BIDDY-TYPES FROM SCARSDALE AND WHITE PLAINS.

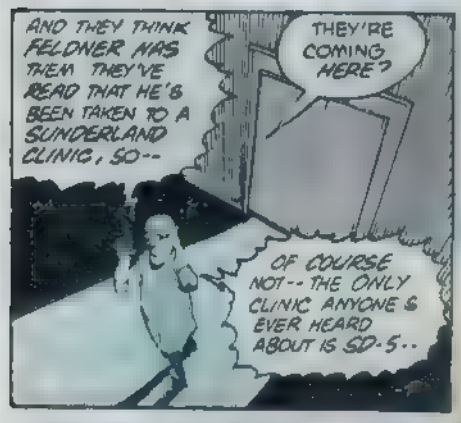
SO YOUR JOB IS TO FIND THAT SOMETHING ELSE I WANT HARRY "NAILED."
REPORT ON HARRY KAY
AND I WANT HOLLAND'S CARCASS--BUT BEFORE HE DIES
AND I WANT IT BAD.

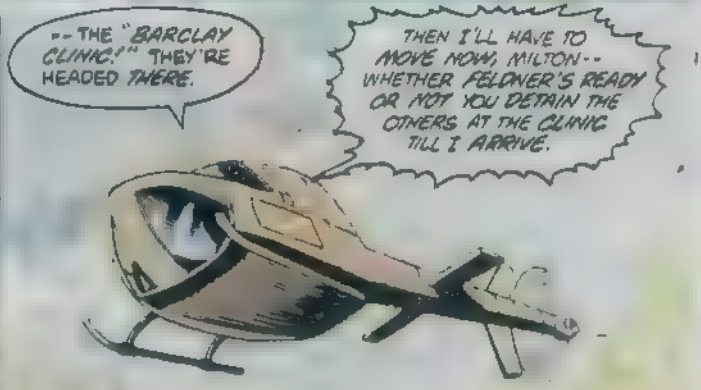
EVEN AS GENERAL SUNDERLAND SPEAKS, THE OBJECT OF ONE OF HIS OBSESSIONS MAKES AN UNANNOUNCED APPEARANCE...

...AT THE PRIVATE "DISPENSARY" ON THE SUB-BASEMENT LEVEL OF SUNDERLAND HEADQUARTERS



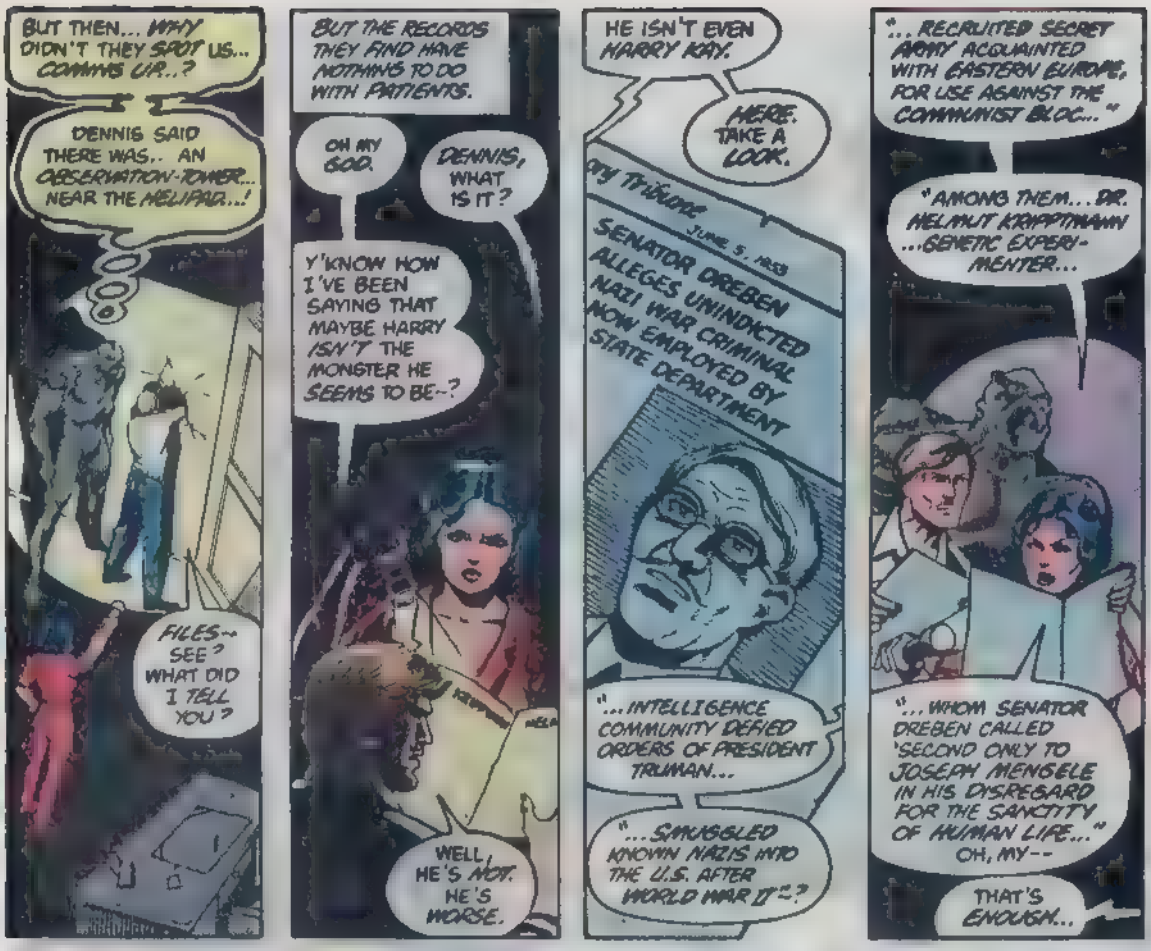

K-4 TO K-ONE--HAVE RE-ESTABLISHED MY PSI-LINK WITH THE LOCKET... AND HOLLAND.
THEY'VE BEGUN TO SUSPECT THE GIRL IS DANGEROUS, DR KAY. THEY WANT SOME ANSWERS.

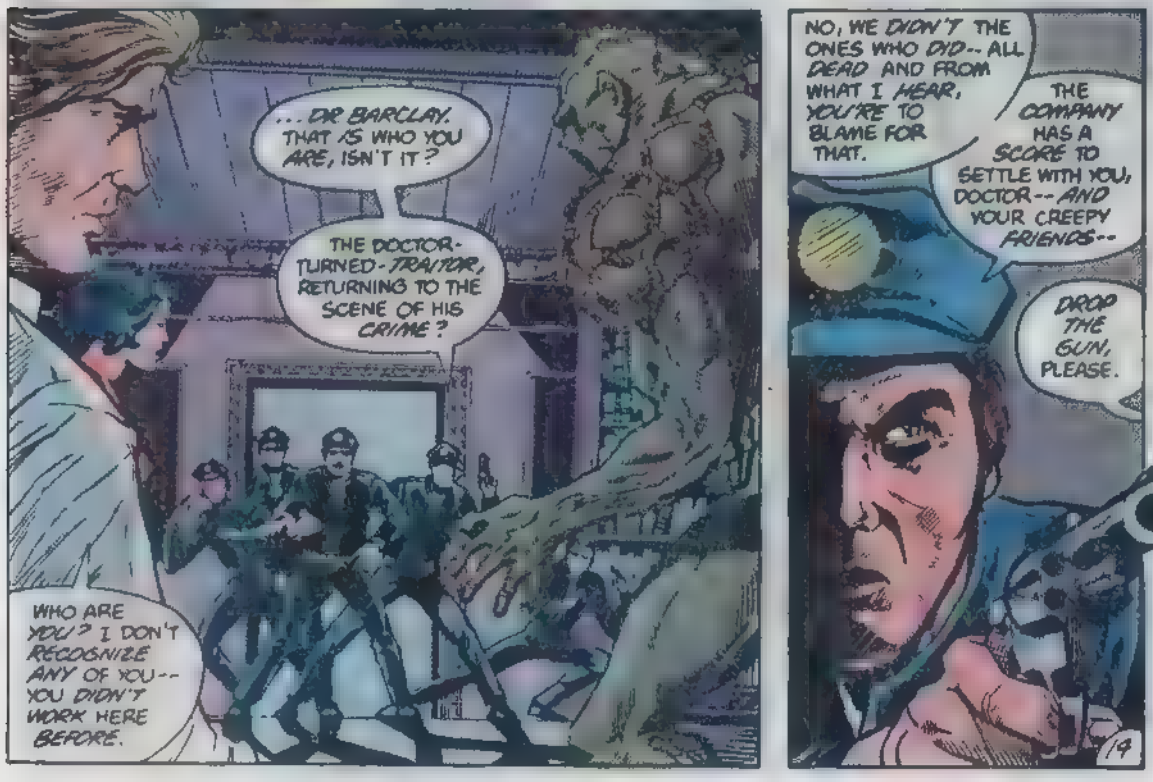

AND THEY THINK FELDNER WAS THERE THEY'VE READ THAT HE'S BEEN TAKEN TO A SUNDERLAND CLINIC, SO--
THEY'RE COMING HERE?
OF COURSE NOT--THE ONLY CLINIC ANYONE'S EVER HEARD ABOUT IS SD-5..


--THE "BARCLAY CLINIC!" THEY'RE HEADED THERE.
THEN I'LL HAVE TO MOVE NOW, MILTON--WHETHER FELDNER'S READY OR NOT YOU DETAIN THE OTHERS AT THE CLINIC TILL I ARRIVE.

HEY! YOU THERE--'
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DO-- AGGGH'
"I WANT TO KNOW WHY KAY'S SO INTERESTED IN THAT GUY WHO GOT BURNED-- WHAT'S-HIS-NAME--?"
'FELDNER, SIR? PAUL FELDNER? HE'S THE ASSOCIATE PRODUCER OF 'IN-DEPTH MAGAZINE'--
--THE SYNDICATED TV NEWS-SHOW LIZABETH TREMAYNE HOSTS-- I MEAN, HOSTED-- BEFORE SHE WAS KILLED
GLOBAL COMMUNICATIONS
ALLEGEDLY KILLED, ELLENBECK
THAT INTELLIGENCE COMES FROM KAY, REMEMBER SO I WANT THAT VERIFIED, TOO.
BUT KAY ALSO SAYS HE TRIED TO BRING IN HOLLAND AND BARCLAY--
-- BUT LOST THEM I THINK HE'S LYING -- AND I WANT YOU TO PROVE IT.
VARIETY
'IOM' S LIZABETH TREMAYNE, 32, DROWNED IN OCEAN LINER ACCIDENT; PRODUCER FELDNER HOSPITALIZED W UNRE-LATED BURN-ACC DENT
12

SOMETHING TELLS ME THAT WHEN YOU DO, WE'LL FIND HOLLAND, TOO.
KAY IS OVERDUE FOR A CHECK-IN, SIR.
I'LL ASSIGN SURVEILLANCE-DETAILS TO ALL LOCATIONS HE'S KNOWN TO FREQUENT...
.. AND HAVE SOME ANSWERS FOR YOU WITHIN 24 HOURS.
THE FOLLOWING MORNING, AN HOUR BEFORE DAWN:
MR. GROSSMAN-- LOOK.
I SEE THEM. ALERT THE.. "STAFF."
DENNIS, WE'RE TAKING AN INSANE RISK.
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO WAS SO DETERMINED TO FIND FELDNER L!Z.
AND ACCORDING TO THE STORY I READ--
--HE WAS TAKEN TO A SUNDERLAND-OWNED CLINIC--
--WHICH MEANS ONLY ONE PLACE I KNOW: THE CLINIC HARRY KAY AND I RAN TOGETHER-- THIS ONE. *
SMELL
I DO WANT TO SEE PAUL AGAIN. BUT PREFERABLY NOT IN "THE HEREAFTER."
* FIRST SHOWN IN SOLOST #6 --LEN
RELAX-- IF SUNDERLAND KNEW WHERE TO LOOK FOR US, THEY'D HAVE FOUND US BY NOW
YOU KNOW HOW SOPHISTICATED THEIR SURVEILLANCE METHODS ARE--
DENNIS, LOOK! THEY- THEY'VE SHUT IT DOWN--?!
YOU MEAN... THE PLACE HAS BEEN .. ABANDONED...?
"THEN LET'S GO.' BUT WE'D.. BETTER BE... VERY CAREFUL..!"
DENNIS, WHAT GOOD IS THIS GOING TO DO? WE'VE BEEN ALL OVER-- THERE'S NO SIGN OF PAUL!
MAYBE NOT-- BUT HARRY WAS A FANATIC ABOUT KEEPING RECORDS.
IF PATIENTS WERE TRANSFERRED SOMEWHERE ELSE, WE'LL KNOW ABOUT IT
"TRY THE SAFE, ALEC-- IT'S HIDDEN BEHIND THAT BOOKCASE THERE."
THIS IS... TOO "PAT".. TOO EASY..' PLACE BEING TOTALLY DESERTED.. DOESN'T MAKE SENSE ..!
THERE'S GOT TO BE A..."SKELETON-STAFF" ON DUTY... AT LEAST...!


BUT THEN... WHY DIDN'T THEY SPOT US... COMING UP..?
DENNIS SAID THERE WAS.. AN OBSERVATION-TOWER... NEAR THE HELIPAD...!
FILES-- SEE? WHAT DID I TELL YOU?
BUT THE RECORDS THEY FIND HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH PATIENTS.
OH MY GOD.
DENNIS, WHAT IS IT?
Y'KNOW HOW I'VE BEEN SAYING THAT MAYBE HARRY ISN'T THE MONSTER HE SEEMS TO BE--?
WELL, HE'S NOT. HE'S WORSE.
HE ISN'T EVEN HARRY KAY.
HERE. TAKE A LOOK.
SENATOR DREBEN ALLEGES UNINDICTED NAZI WAR CRIMINAL NOW EMPLOYED BY STATE DEPARTMENT
"...INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY DEFIED ORDERS OF PRESIDENT TRUMAN...
"...SMUGGLED KNOWN NAZIS INTO THE U.S. AFTER WORLD WAR II"--?
"...RECRUITED SECRET ARMY ACQUAINTED WITH EASTERN EUROPE, FOR USE AGAINST THE COMMUNIST BLOC..."
"AMONG THEM... DR. HELMUT KRAPTMANN ...GENETIC EXPERIMENTER...
"...WHOM SENATOR DREBEN CALLED 'SECOND ONLY TO JOSEPH MENGELE IN HIS DISREGARD FOR THE SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE..."
OH, MY--
THAT'S ENOUGH...


...DR BARCLAY. THAT IS WHO YOU ARE, ISN'T IT?
THE DOCTOR-TURNED-TRAITOR, RETURNING TO THE SCENE OF HIS CRIME?
WHO ARE YOU? I DON'T RECOGNIZE ANY OF YOU-- YOU DIDN'T WORK HERE BEFORE.
NO, WE DIDN'T THE ONES WHO DID-- ALL DEAD AND FROM WHAT I HEAR, YOU'RE TO BLAME FOR THAT.
THE COMPANY HAS A SCORE TO SETTLE WITH YOU, DOCTOR-- AND YOUR CREEPY FRIENDS--
DROP THE GUN, PLEASE.

I ASKED YOU TO DROP IT I WON'T ASK AGAIN

YEAH? WHO THE HELL ARE YOU, ANYWAY? YOU DON'T WORK HERE

AND WHADDYA GONNA DO TO ME IF I DON'T DROP IT, CRIPPLE-- STARE ME TO DEATH?

COINCIDENTALLY ENOUGH YES

THAT IS PRECISELY WHAT I WILL DO

AAAAAHHH

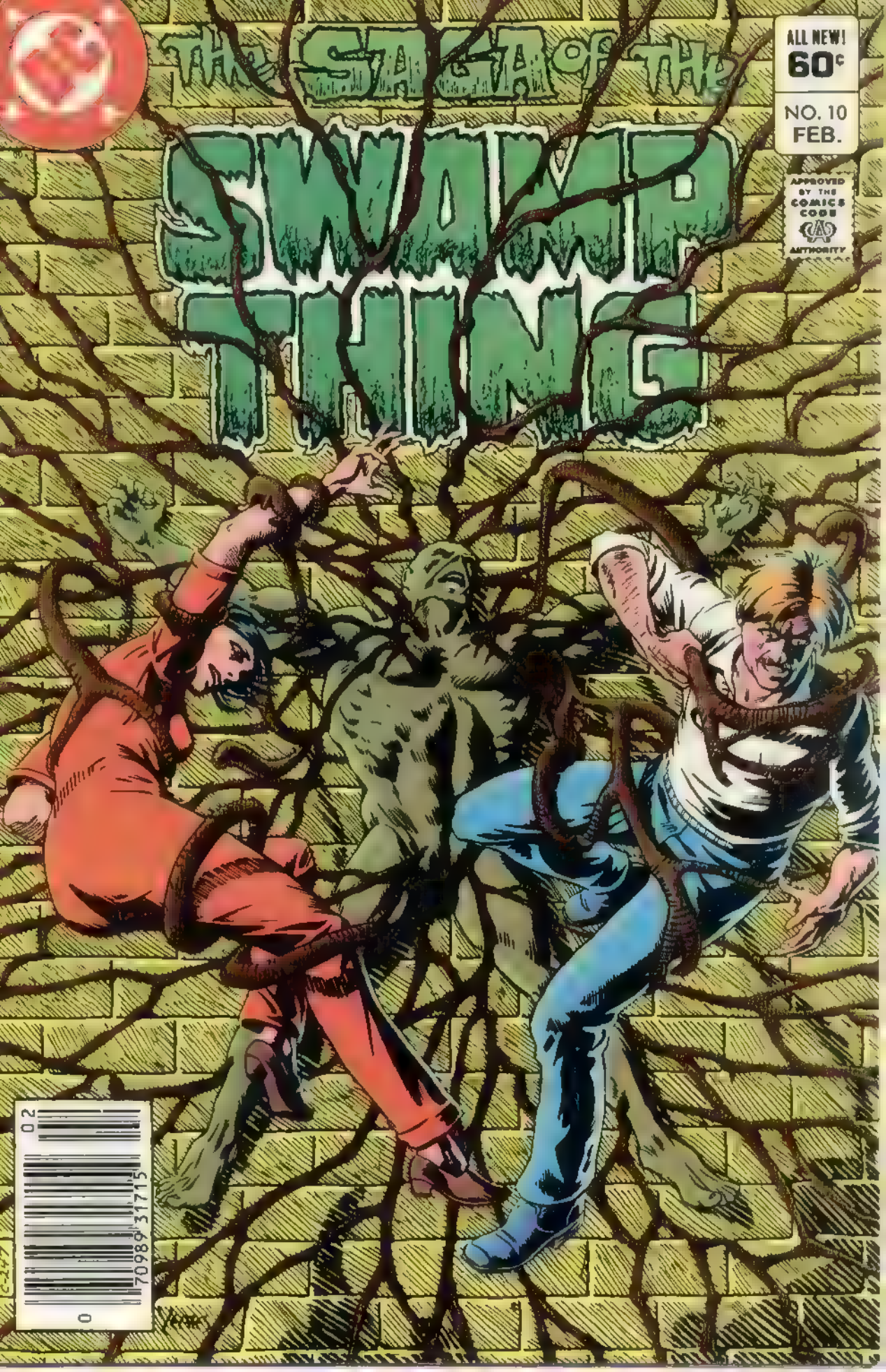
IT TAKES ONLY SECONDS TO HAPPEN BUT WOULD BE NO BETTER UNDERSTOOD FOR TAKING AN ETERNITY

PSIONIC ENERGY MORE FEROCIOUS THAN ANYTHING ALEC HOLLAND CAN IMAGINE-- UNLEASHED WITH TERRIFYING SUDDENNESS

DOOM

IT IS A POWER WHICH--LIKE ALL THE GREAT DESTRUCTIVE FORCES MAN HAS UNCOVERED BUT NOT QUITE MASTERED--
--IS SELDOM USED PRECISELY BECAUSE IT IS SO POWERFUL
. . AND BECAUSE THE PRICE OF USING IT IS SO GREAT
HOURS PASS BEFORE THE MONSTER THAT WAS ONCE DR ALEC HOLLAND EMERGES FROM THE DEEP BLACK TUNNEL OF OBLIVION.
GET AWAY FROM ME . !
GET . . AWAY . . !
EASY, ALEC-- THEY WON'T HURT US.
CALM YOURSELF, DR HOLLAND. YOU ARE AMONG . .
WELL IF NOT FRIENDS, EXACTLY, THEN . . . POTENTIAL ALLIES.
WE NEED YOUR HELP . . DESPERATELY. AND YOUR TRUST
DON'T WASTE YOUR BREATH, HERR GROSSMAN. I BELIEVE IT'S FAR TOO LATE FOR TRUST.
HARRY KAY! OR SHOULD I SAY, DR HELMUT KRIPPTMANN?
PAUL!
THIS STAFF THAT BALD GUY-- THEY WORK FOR YOU, NOT SUNDERLAND, DON T THEY?
ACH SO MANY MYSTERIES, NEIN? YOU LL GET YOUR ANSWERS, OLD COLLEAGUE--ALL IN DUE TIME
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE? WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE?
FOR NOW, LET US DEAL, INSTEAD, IN FACTS:
FACT I HAD HOPED TO OBTAIN FROM MR FELDNER INFORMATION OF VITAL IMPORTANCE TO THE FUTURE OF THE WORLD.
HE, HOWEVER, CANNOT RECOLLECT WHAT I WISH TO KNOW.
A BRUSH WITH DEATH HAS CAUSED MEMORY-BLOCK-- TRAUMATIC AMNESIA
FACT. I NOW REQUIRE YOUR ASSISTANCE TO OBTAIN THIS INFORMATION. FROM . . . ANOTHER SOURCE
THEREFORE I MUST KNOW NOW-- AND WITHOUT FURTHER ELABORATION, FOR TIME GROWS SHORT:
WILL I HAVE YOUR CO-OPERATION. WILLINGLY?
16

YOU SAY THAT AS IF YOU'RE CONFIDENT YOU CAN FORCE OUR CO-OPERATION.
I CAN. BUT I GIVE YOU THE COURTESY OF CHOICE...
...FOR I HAVE NOT YET ABANDONED HOPE OF PROVING YOU WRONG ABOUT MY CHARACTER
BUT ENOUGH. YOUR ANSWER?
YOU GO TO HELL.
AN UNFORTUNATE TURN OF PHRASE...CONSIDERING.
I BELIEVE YOU'LL FIND IT'S YOU WHO'S ABOUT TO MAKE THAT PARTICULAR JOURNEY.
MILTON--?
YES, DR KRIPPTMANN.
WHAMM
AGAIN, IT HAPPENS MORE SUDDENLY THAN CAN BE IMAGINED--A HOLOCAUST OF MENTAL FORCE...
...TEARING INTO THE SWAMP THING, MUTATING HIM, RESHAPING HIM AGAINST HIS WILL...
...INTO A LIVING, GROWING INSTRUMENT OF DEATH.
NEXT: NUMBER OF THE BEAST!


THE SAGA of the
SWAMP THING
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO. 10
FEB.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY

SO MANY THINGS TO BE WRONG ABOUT AT ONCE:
HE HAD THOUGHT THE AGONY THAT SPAWNED HIM WAS THE GREATEST PAIN THERE IS. HE WAS WRONG.
HE HAD THOUGHT HIS DEATH, SO LONG IN COMING, WOULD BE A BLESSING WHEN FINALLY IT DID COME. HE WAS WRONG ABOUT THAT, TOO.
AND HE THOUGHT NO MAN COULD HAVE ANY FIGHT LEFT IN HIM AFTER WHAT HE'S BEEN THROUGH WRONG AGAIN.
FOR ALEC HOLLAND ONLY USED TO BE A MAN NOW HE IS A MONSTER -- A...
AND FOR THAT MONSTER, THE FIGHT IS ONLY JUST BEGINNING.
WHAT IN THE NAME OF GOD--?
THE--THE ROOTS ON YOUR BODY, ALEC-- THEY'RE GROWING--!
IMPOSSIBLE... AS IT SEEMS...
CREATED BY LEN WEIN AND BERNI WRIGHTSON
YOU'RE RIGHT, LIZ...! THEY...THEY'VE COME ALIVE... COILING AROUND YOU...MY FRIENDS...
...CHOKING THE LIFE FROM YOU...!
AND...LORD HELP ME...THERE'S NOTHING I CAN DO... TO STOP THEM...!
LIZ...PAUL...ALEC! WE'VE GOT TO... CO-OPERATE WITH KRIPPTMANN...GIVE HIM WHATEVER HE WANTS--!
NO, DENNIS...!
I--I SHOULD NEVER HAVE DEFIED HIM--WE'LL ALL DIE--!
HIM--THE ENEMY: A MAN NAMED DR. HELMUT KRIPPTMANN--
--WHOM TV-JOURNALISTS LIZ TREMAYNE AND PAUL FELDNER, AND DR. DENNIS BARCLAY, HAD KNOWN AS DR. HARRY KAY...
J-8507
1

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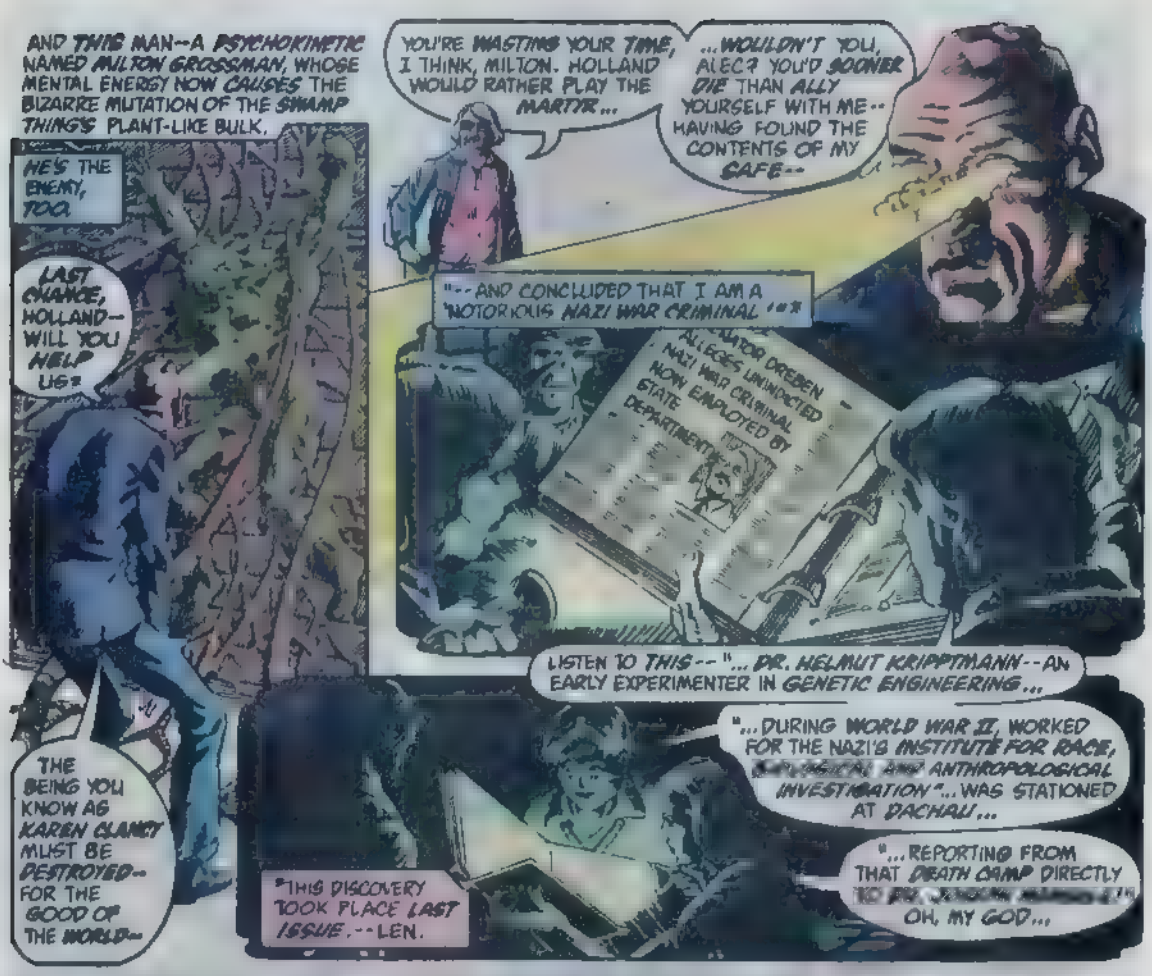
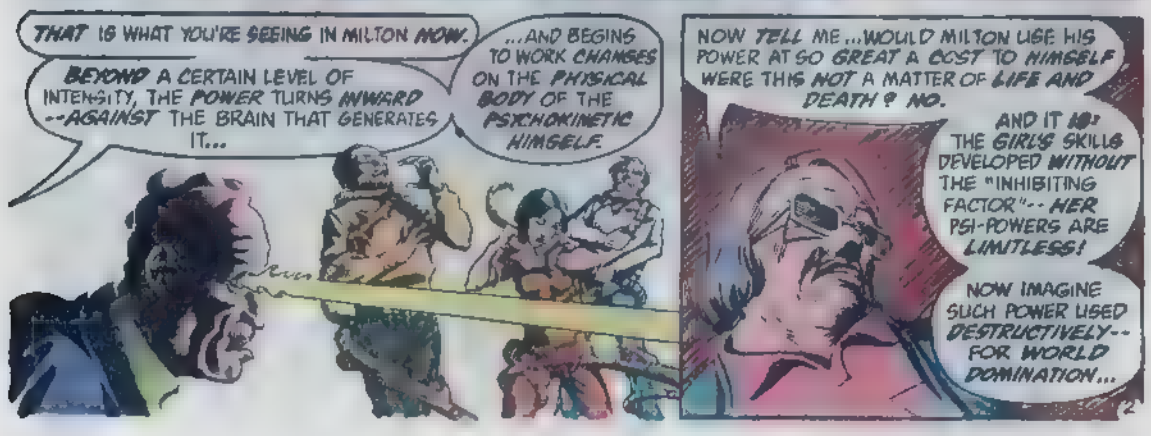
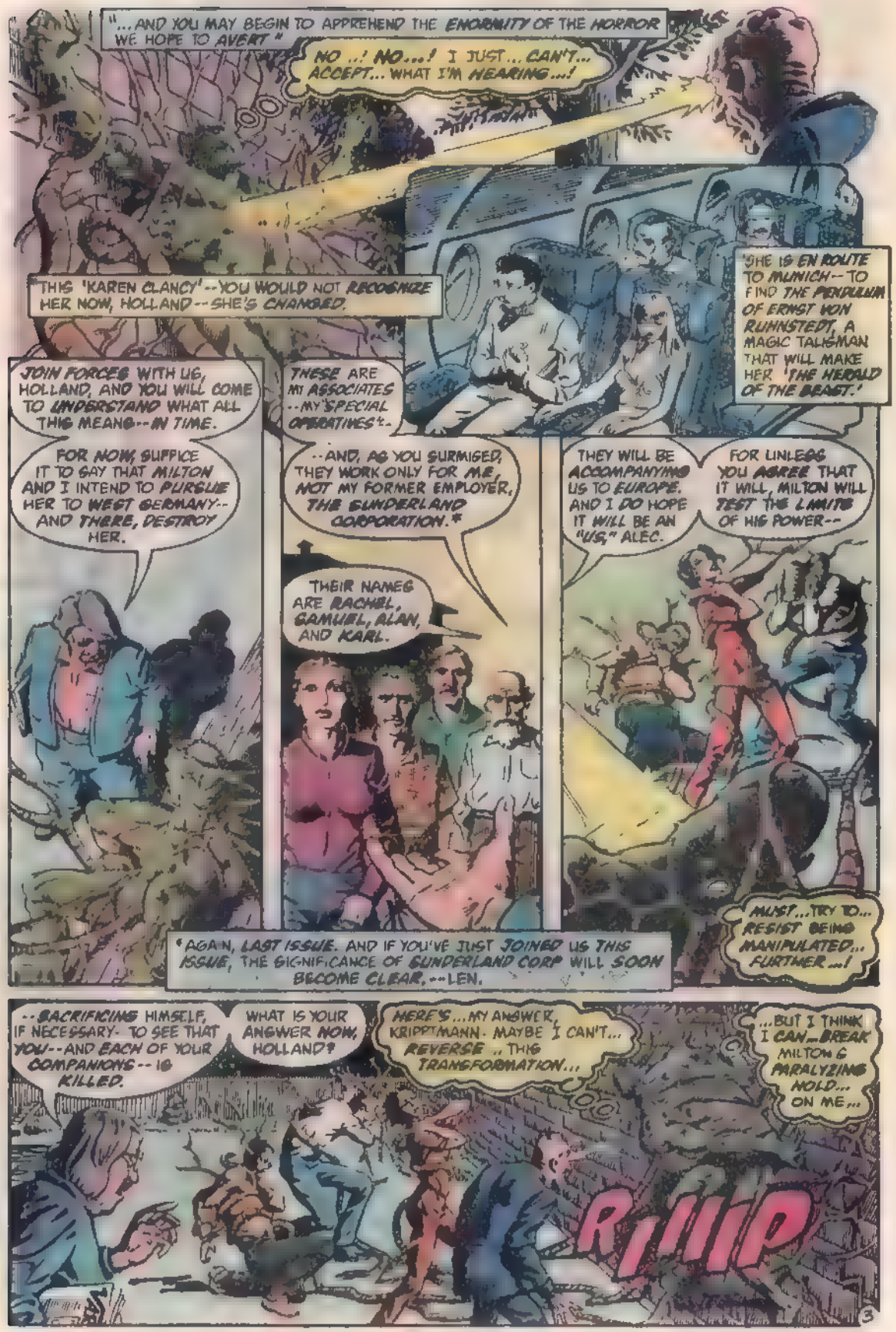
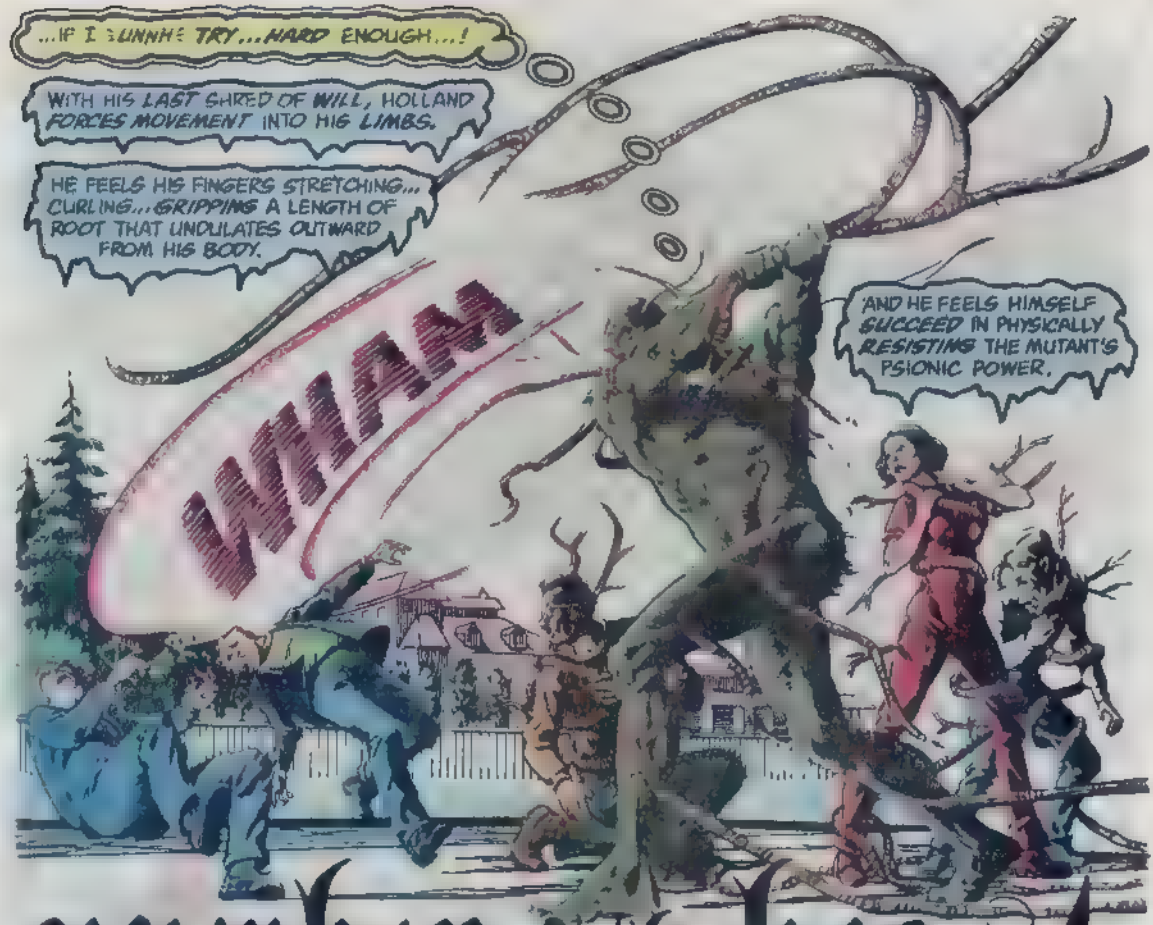

AND THIS MAN--A PSYCHOKINETIC NAMED MILTON GROSSMAN, WHOSE MENTAL ENERGY NOW CAUSES THE BIZARRE MUTATION OF THE SWAMP THING'S PLANT-LIKE BULK.
YOU'RE WASTING YOUR TIME, I THINK, MILTON. HOLLAND WOULD RATHER PLAY THE MARTYR...
...WOULDN'T YOU, ALEC? YOU'D SOONER DIE THAN ALLY YOURSELF WITH ME-- HAVING FOUND THE CONTENTS OF MY SAFE--
HE'S THE ENEMY, TOO.
LAST CHANCE, HOLLAND-- WILL YOU HELP US?
"--AND CONCLUDED THAT I AM A "NOTORIOUS NAZI WAR CRIMINAL!"*
GAUNTLET
GAUNTLET ORDERED ALLEGES UNINDICTED NAZI WAR CRIMINAL NOW EMPLOYED BY STATE DEPARTMENT
LISTEN TO THIS--"...DR. HELMUT KRIPPTMANN--AN EARLY EXPERIMENTER IN GENETIC ENGINEERING...
"...DURING WORLD WAR II, WORKED FOR THE NAZI'S INSTITUTE FOR RACE, [illegible] AND ANTHROPOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION"...WAS STATIONED AT DACHAU...
"...REPORTING FROM THAT DEATH CAMP DIRECTLY TO [illegible]!"
OH, MY GOD...
THE BEING YOU KNOW AS KAREN CLANCY MUST BE DESTROYED-- FOR THE GOOD OF THE WORLD--
*THIS DISCOVERY TOOK PLACE LAST ISSUE.--LEN.

YOUR... INTEGRITY IS COMMENDABLE. BUT CONSIDER THIS:
MILTON IS USING ONLY A FRACTION OF HIS POTENTIAL POWER. TO USE ALL OF IT WOULD DESTROY HIM.
HE IS A MUTANT--OF THE SAME... "SPECIES" AS THE CLANCY GIRL.
IN MOST SUCH MUTANTS THERE IS A BUILT-IN "INHIBITING FACTOR": THE DEFORMITY IT CAUSES.

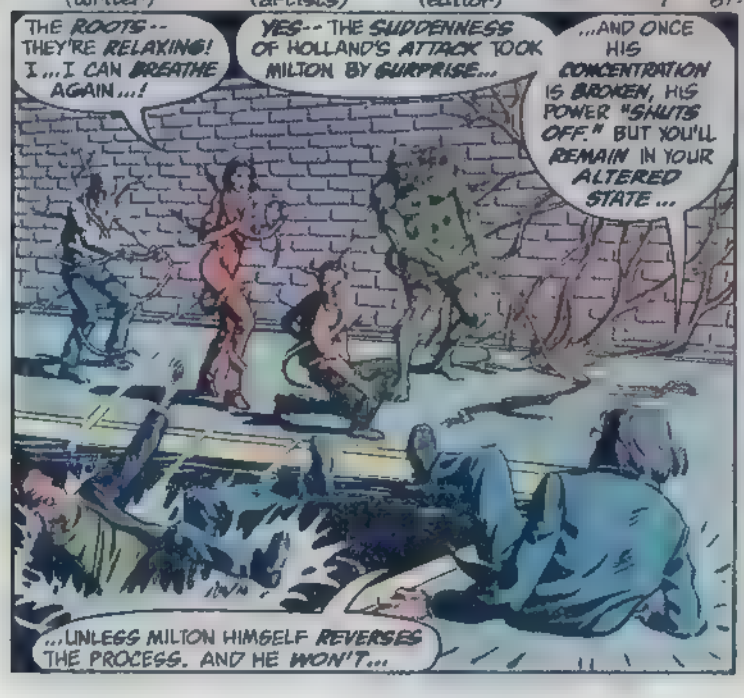

THAT IS WHAT YOU'RE SEEING IN MILTON NOW.
BEYOND A CERTAIN LEVEL OF INTENSITY, THE POWER TURNS INWARD --AGAINST THE BRAIN THAT GENERATES IT...
...AND BEGINS TO WORK CHANGES ON THE PHYSICAL BODY OF THE PSYCHOKINETIC HIMSELF.
NOW TELL ME...WOULD MILTON USE HIS POWER AT SO GREAT A COST TO HIMSELF WERE THIS NOT A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH? NO.
AND IT IS! THE GIRL'S SKILLS DEVELOPED WITHOUT THE "INHIBITING FACTOR"--HER PSI-POWERS ARE LIMITLESS!
NOW IMAGINE SUCH POWER USED DESTRUCTIVELY-- FOR WORLD DOMINATION...


"...AND YOU MAY BEGIN TO APPREHEND THE ENORMITY OF THE HORROR WE HOPE TO AVERT."
NO ..! NO...! I JUST... CAN'T... ACCEPT... WHAT I'M HEARING...!
THIS 'KAREN CLANCY'--YOU WOULD NOT RECOGNIZE HER NOW, HOLLAND--SHE'S CHANGED.
SHE IS EN ROUTE TO MUNICH--TO FIND THE PENDULUM OF ERNST VON RUHNSTEDT, A MAGIC TALISMAN THAT WILL MAKE HER 'THE HERALD OF THE BEAST.'
JOIN FORCES WITH US, HOLLAND, AND YOU WILL COME TO UNDERSTAND WHAT ALL THIS MEANS--IN TIME.
FOR NOW, SUFFICE IT TO SAY THAT MILTON AND I INTEND TO PURSUE HER TO WEST GERMANY--AND THERE, DESTROY HER.
THESE ARE MY ASSOCIATES--MY 'SPECIAL OPERATIVES'--
--AND, AS YOU SURMISED, THEY WORK ONLY FOR ME, NOT MY FORMER EMPLOYER, THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION.*
THEIR NAMES ARE RACHEL, SAMUEL, ALAN, AND KARL.
THEY WILL BE ACCOMPANYING US TO EUROPE. AND I DO HOPE IT WILL BE AN "US," ALEC.
FOR UNLESS YOU AGREE THAT IT WILL, MILTON WILL TEST THE LIMITS OF HIS POWER--
MUST...TRY TO... RESIST BEING MANIPULATED... FURTHER...!
*AGAIN, LAST ISSUE. AND IF YOU'VE JUST JOINED US THIS ISSUE, THE SIGNIFICANCE OF SUNDERLAND CORP WILL SOON BECOME CLEAR.--LEN.
--SACRIFICING HIMSELF, IF NECESSARY- TO SEE THAT YOU--AND EACH OF YOUR COMPANIONS--IS KILLED.
WHAT IS YOUR ANSWER NOW, HOLLAND?
HERE'S...MY ANSWER, KRIPPTMANN. MAYBE I CAN'T... REVERSE .. THIS TRANSFORMATION...
...BUT I THINK I CAN...BREAK MILTON'S PARALYZING HOLD... ON ME...
RIIIP
3

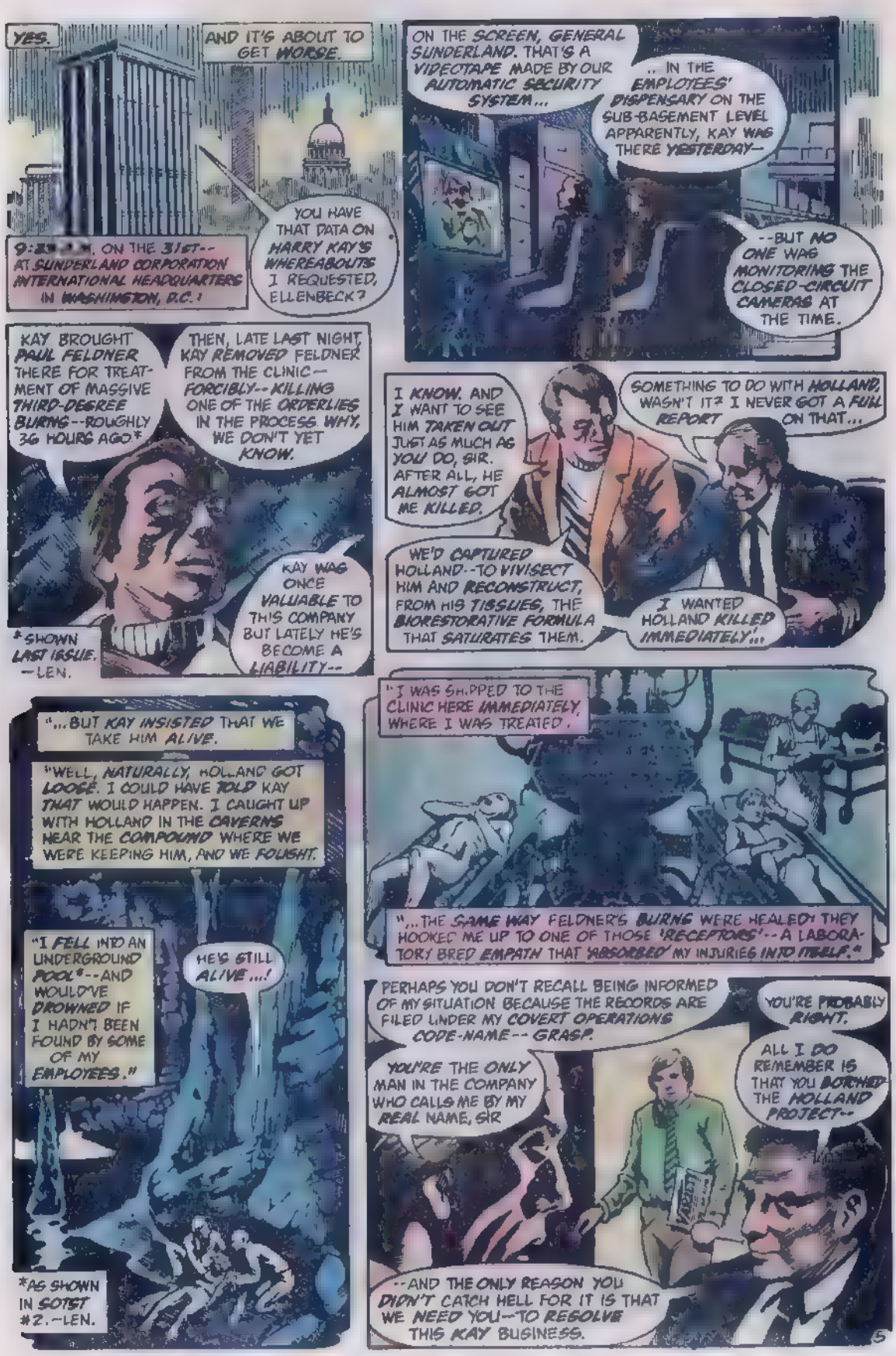

...IF I GUNNH! TRY...HARD ENOUGH...!
WITH HIS LAST SHRED OF WILL, HOLLAND FORCES MOVEMENT INTO HIS LIMBS.
HE FEELS HIS FINGERS STRETCHING... CURLING...GRIPPING A LENGTH OF ROOT THAT UNDULATES OUTWARD FROM HIS BODY.
WHAM
AND HE FEELS HIMSELF SUCCEED IN PHYSICALLY RESISTING THE MUTANT'S PSIONIC POWER.

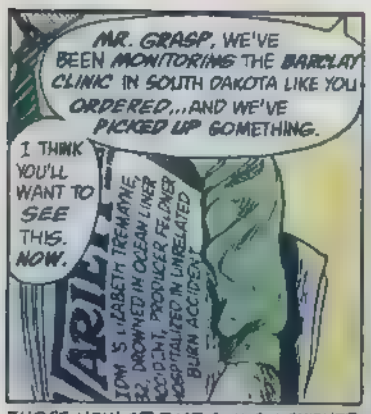
number of the beast

A MARTIN PASKO . YEATES & ROTLEBEN . LEN WEIN PRESENTATION / ASSISTED BY: TATJANA WOOD . TODD KLEIN
(writer) (artists) (editor) (colorist) (guest letterer)


THE ROOTS-- THEY'RE RELAXING! I...I CAN BREATHE AGAIN...!
YES-- THE SUDDENNESS OF HOLLAND'S ATTACK TOOK MILTON BY SURPRISE...
...AND ONCE HIS CONCENTRATION IS BROKEN, HIS POWER "SHUTS OFF." BUT YOU'LL REMAIN IN YOUR ALTERED STATE...
...UNLESS MILTON HIMSELF REVERSES THE PROCESS. AND HE WON'T...

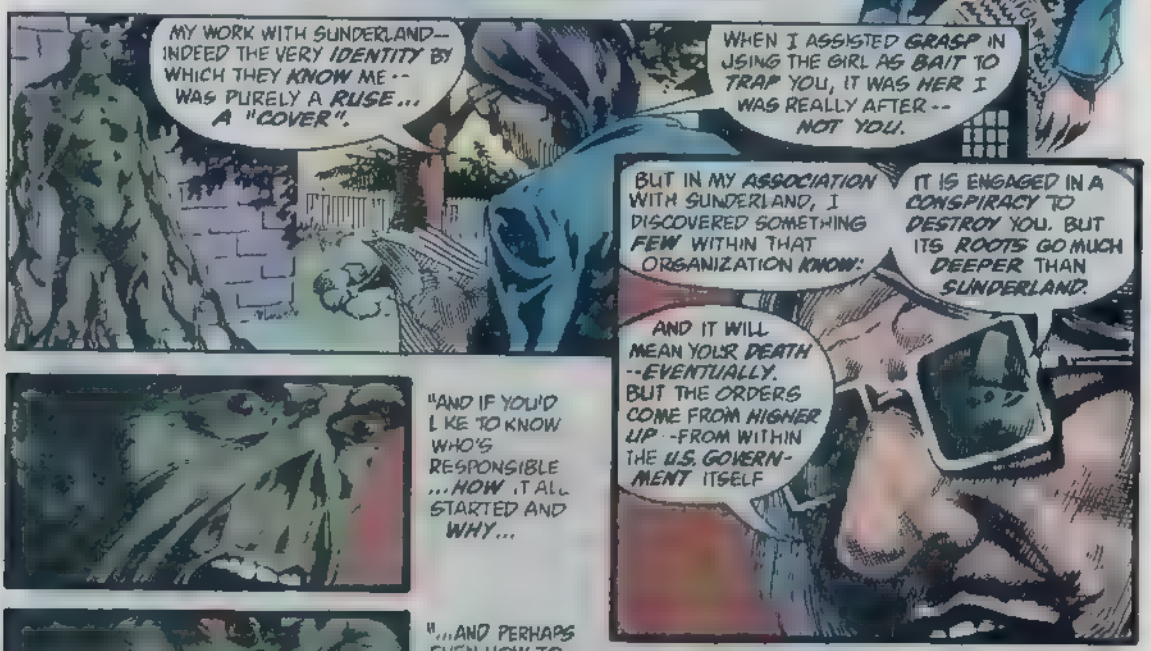
--UNLESS I SO ORDER IT. GO IF YOU WISH EVER TO BE "NORMAL" AGAIN...
...YOU'LL GIVE ME YOUR WORD THAT YOU WILL CO-OPERATE.
HMM... THEY'RE SO... DETERMINED...! I WONDER...
COULD THE SITUATION REALLY BE AS DESPERATE AS THEY CLAIM...?

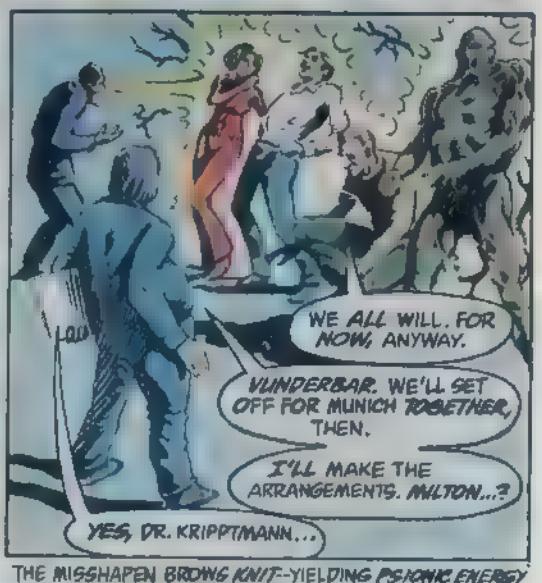

YES.
AND IT'S ABOUT TO GET WORSE.
9:23 A.M. ON THE 31ST--AT SUNDERLAND CORPORATION INTERNATIONAL HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON, D.C.!
YOU HAVE THAT DATA ON HARRY KAY'S WHEREABOUTS I REQUESTED, ELLENBECK?
ON THE SCREEN, GENERAL SUNDERLAND. THAT'S A VIDEOTAPE MADE BY OUR AUTOMATIC SECURITY SYSTEM...
.. IN THE EMPLOYEES' DISPENSARY ON THE SUB-BASEMENT LEVEL APPARENTLY, KAY WAS THERE YESTERDAY--
--BUT NO ONE WAS MONITORING THE CLOSED-CIRCUIT CAMERAS AT THE TIME.
KAY BROUGHT PAUL FELDNER THERE FOR TREATMENT OF MASSIVE THIRD-DEGREE BURNS--ROUGHLY 36 HOURS AGO*
THEN, LATE LAST NIGHT, KAY REMOVED FELDNER FROM THE CLINIC--FORCIBLY--KILLING ONE OF THE ORDERLIES IN THE PROCESS. WHY, WE DON'T YET KNOW.
KAY WAS ONCE VALUABLE TO THIS COMPANY BUT LATELY HE'S BECOME A LIABILITY--
*SHOWN LAST ISSUE. --LEN.
I KNOW. AND I WANT TO SEE HIM TAKEN OUT JUST AS MUCH AS YOU DO, SIR. AFTER ALL, HE ALMOST GOT ME KILLED.
SOMETHING TO DO WITH HOLLAND, WASN'T IT? I NEVER GOT A FULL REPORT ON THAT...
WE'D CAPTURED HOLLAND--TO VIVISECT HIM AND RECONSTRUCT, FROM HIS TISSUES, THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA THAT SATURATES THEM.
I WANTED HOLLAND KILLED IMMEDIATELY...
"...BUT KAY INSISTED THAT WE TAKE HIM ALIVE.
"WELL, NATURALLY, HOLLAND GOT LOOSE. I COULD HAVE TOLD KAY THAT WOULD HAPPEN. I CAUGHT UP WITH HOLLAND IN THE CAVERNS NEAR THE COMPOUND WHERE WE WERE KEEPING HIM, AND WE FOUGHT.
"I FELL INTO AN UNDERGROUND POOL*--AND WOULD'VE DROWNED IF I HADN'T BEEN FOUND BY SOME OF MY EMPLOYEES."
HE'S STILL ALIVE...!
*AS SHOWN IN SOTST #2.--LEN.
"I WAS SHIPPED TO THE CLINIC HERE IMMEDIATELY, WHERE I WAS TREATED.
"...THE SAME WAY FELDNER'S BURNS WERE HEALED! THEY HOOKED ME UP TO ONE OF THOSE 'RECEPTORS'--A LABORATORY BRED EMPATH THAT 'ABSORBED' MY INJURIES INTO ITSELF."
PERHAPS YOU DON'T RECALL BEING INFORMED OF MY SITUATION BECAUSE THE RECORDS ARE FILED UNDER MY COVERT OPERATIONS CODE-NAME--GRASP.
YOU'RE PROBABLY RIGHT.
YOU'RE THE ONLY MAN IN THE COMPANY WHO CALLS ME BY MY REAL NAME, SIR
ALL I DO REMEMBER IS THAT YOU BOTCHED THE HOLLAND PROJECT--
--AND THE ONLY REASON YOU DIDN'T CATCH HELL FOR IT IS THAT WE NEED YOU--TO RESOLVE THIS KAY BUSINESS.
5


MR. GRASP, WE'VE BEEN MONITORING THE BARCLAY CLINIC IN SOUTH DAKOTA LIKE YOU ORDERED...AND WE'VE PICKED UP SOMETHING.
I THINK YOU'LL WANT TO SEE THIS. NOW.
VARIETY
TOM SLIZABETH TREMAYNE 82, DROWNED IN OCEAN LINER ACCIDENT, PRODUCER FE..ER HOSPITALIZED IN UNRELATED BURN ACCIDENT

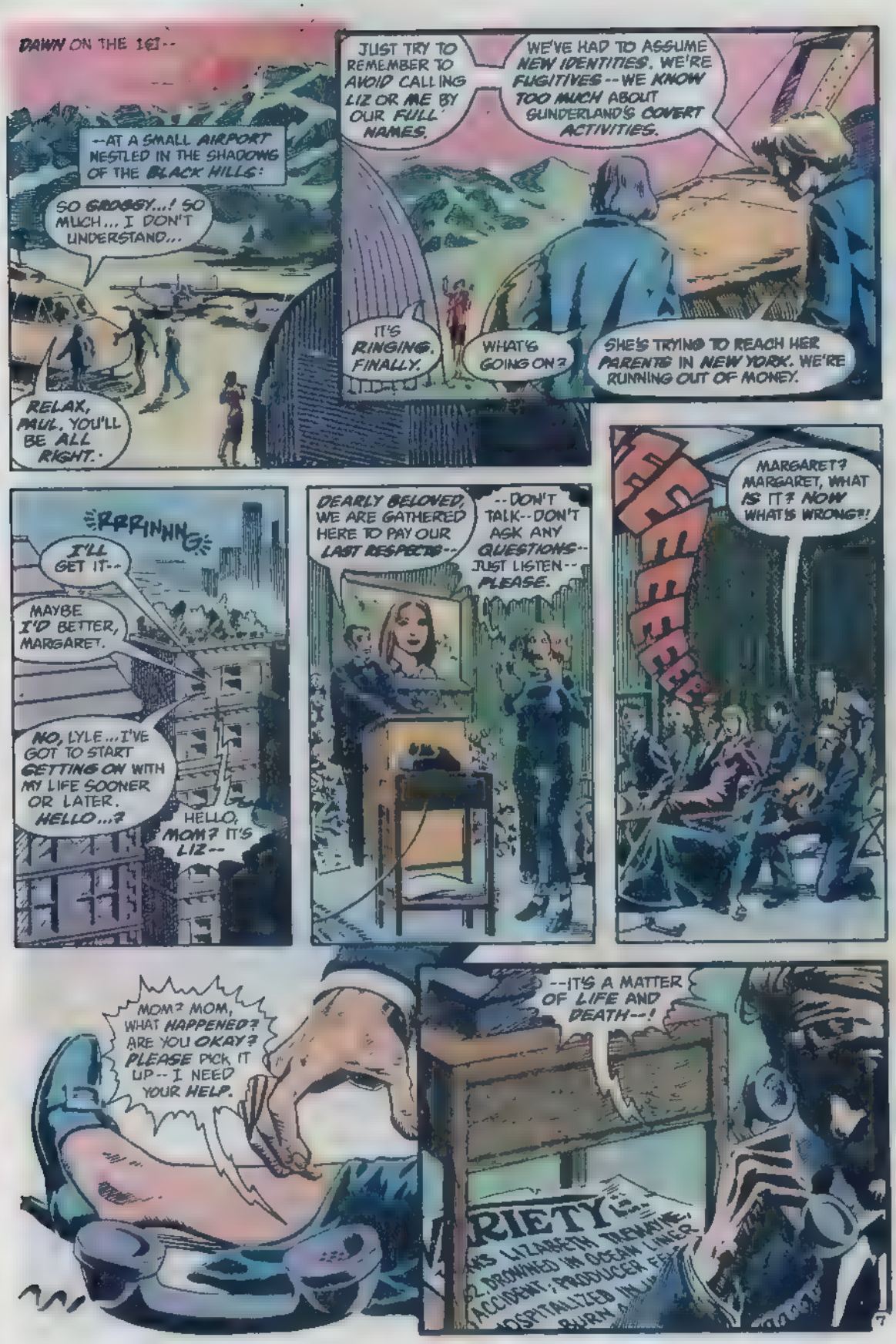
THOSE NOW AT THAT CLINIC, HOWEVER..

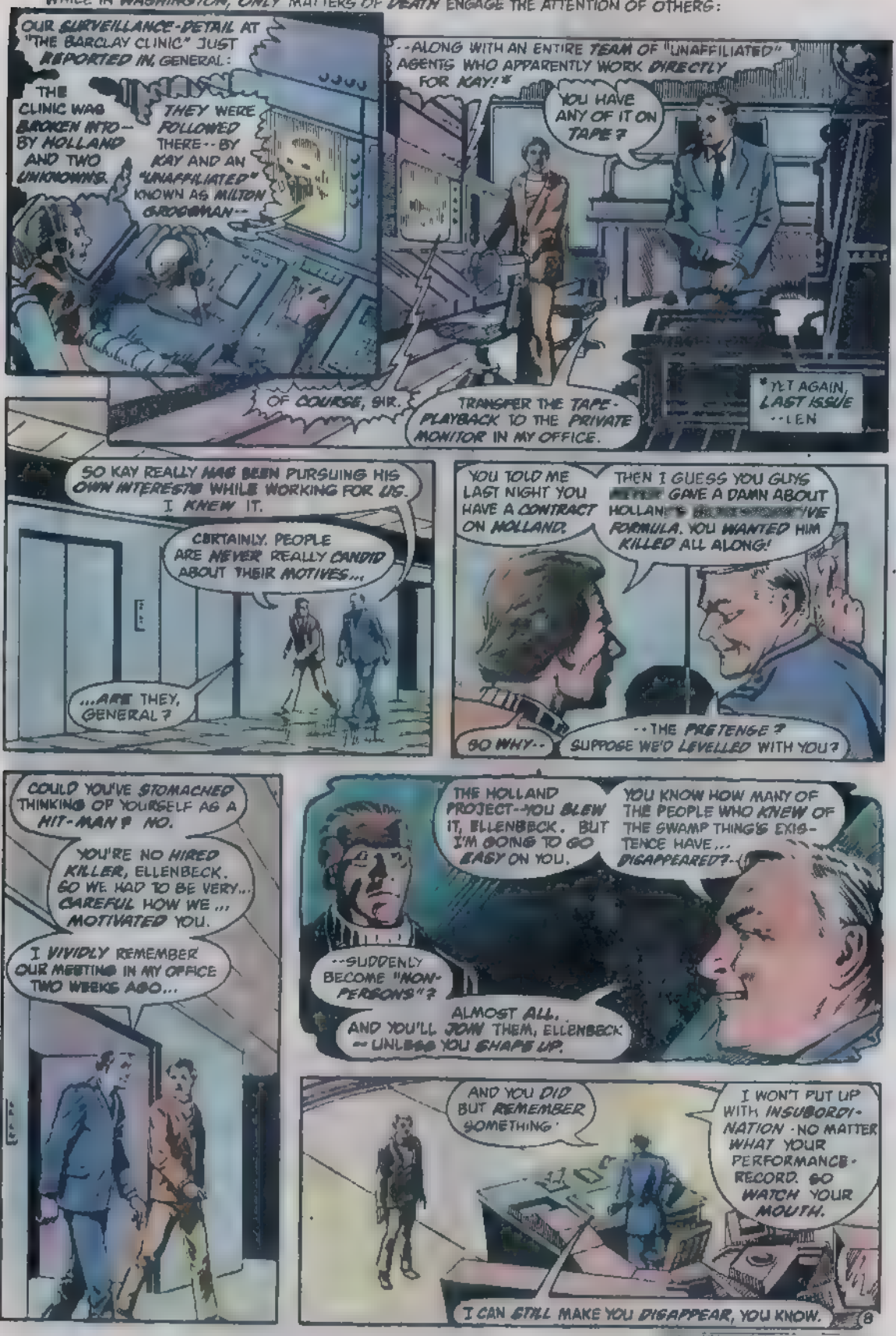
I'VE NEVER SHARED SUNDERLAND'S INTEREST IN YOU, HOLLAND--
--I JUST WANTED TO KILL THE GIRL. THAT HAS BEEN MY OBJECTIVE FROM THE OUTSET.
VARIETY


MY WORK WITH SUNDERLAND--INDEED THE VERY IDENTITY BY WHICH THEY KNOW ME--WAS PURELY A RUSE... A "COVER".
WHEN I ASSISTED GRASP IN USING THE GIRL AS BAIT TO TRAP YOU, IT WAS HER I WAS REALLY AFTER--NOT YOU.
BUT IN MY ASSOCIATION WITH SUNDERLAND, I DISCOVERED SOMETHING FEW WITHIN THAT ORGANIZATION KNOW:
IT IS ENGAGED IN A CONSPIRACY TO DESTROY YOU. BUT ITS ROOTS GO MUCH DEEPER THAN SUNDERLAND.
AND IT WILL MEAN YOUR DEATH--EVENTUALLY. BUT THE ORDERS COME FROM HIGHER UP--FROM WITHIN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ITSELF


WE ALL WILL. FOR NOW, ANYWAY.
VUNDERBAR. WE'LL SET OFF FOR MUNICH TOGETHER, THEN.
I'LL MAKE THE ARRANGEMENTS. MILTON...?
YES, DR. KRIPPTMANN...

THE MISSHAPEN BROWS KNIT--YIELDING PSIONIC ENERGY THAT BEGINS TO REVERSE THE TRANSFORMATIONS.

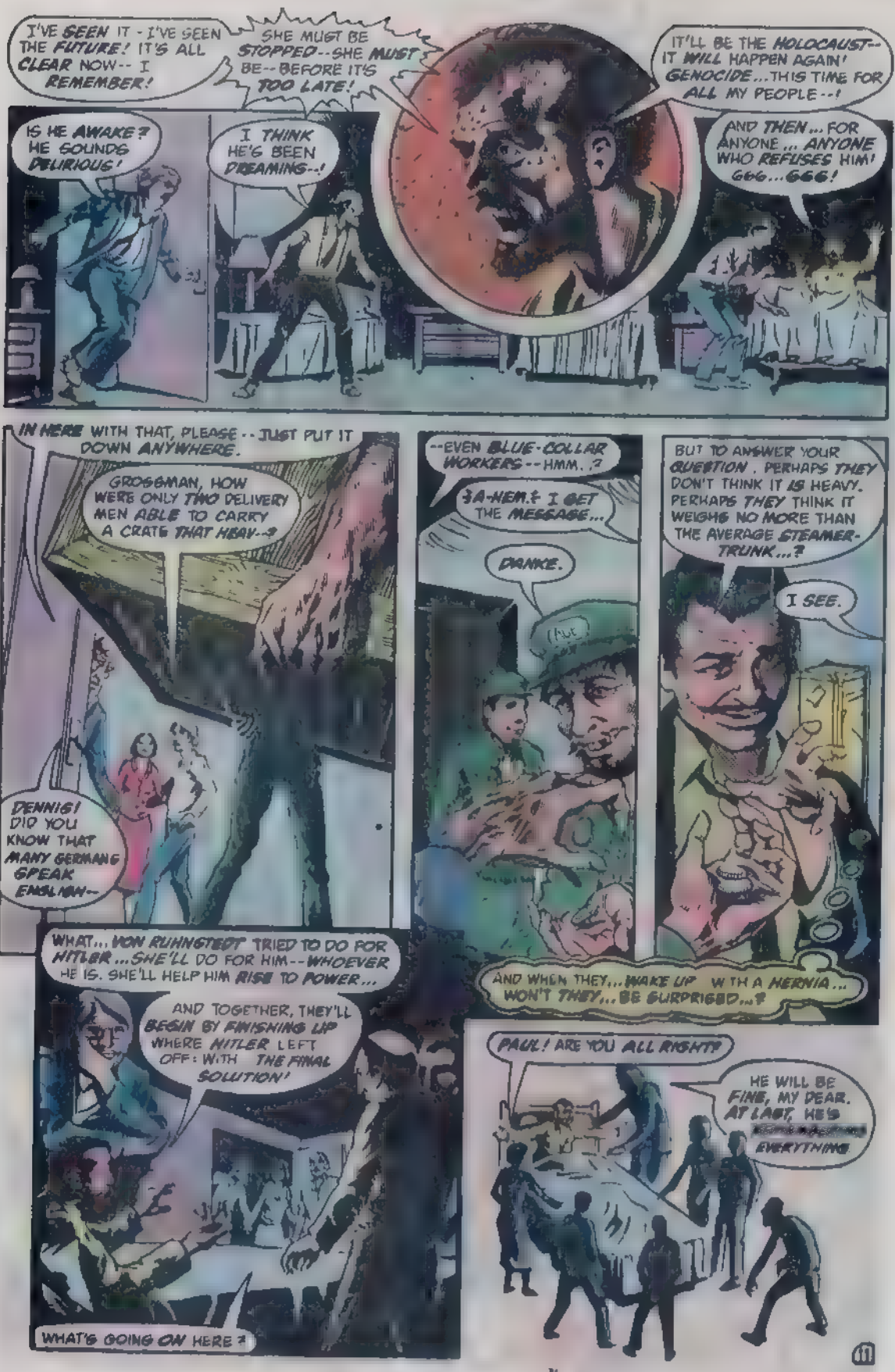

DAWN ON THE 1ST--
--AT A SMALL AIRPORT NESTLED IN THE SHADOWS OF THE BLACK HILLS:
SO GROGGY...! SO MUCH... I DON'T UNDERSTAND...
RELAX, PAUL. YOU'LL BE ALL RIGHT.
JUST TRY TO REMEMBER TO AVOID CALLING LIZ OR ME BY OUR FULL NAMES.
WE'VE HAD TO ASSUME NEW IDENTITIES. WE'RE FUGITIVES--WE KNOW TOO MUCH ABOUT SUNDERLAND'S COVERT ACTIVITIES.
IT'S RINGING. FINALLY.
WHAT'S GOING ON?
SHE'S TRYING TO REACH HER PARENTS IN NEW YORK. WE'RE RUNNING OUT OF MONEY.
RRRINNNG
I'LL GET IT--
MAYBE I'D BETTER, MARGARET.
NO, LYLE...I'VE GOT TO START GETTING ON WITH MY LIFE SOONER OR LATER. HELLO...?
HELLO, MOM? IT'S LIZ--
DEARLY BELOVED, WE ARE GATHERED HERE TO PAY OUR LAST RESPECTS--
--DON'T TALK--DON'T ASK ANY QUESTIONS--JUST LISTEN--PLEASE.
EEEEEEEE
MARGARET? MARGARET, WHAT IS IT? NOW WHAT'S WRONG?!
MOM? MOM, WHAT HAPPENED? ARE YOU OKAY? PLEASE PICK IT UP--I NEED YOUR HELP.
--IT'S A MATTER OF LIFE AND DEATH--!
RIETY
LIZABETH TREMAYNE
DROWNED IN OCEAN LINER
ACCIDENT; PRODUCER
HOSPITALIZED IN
BURN

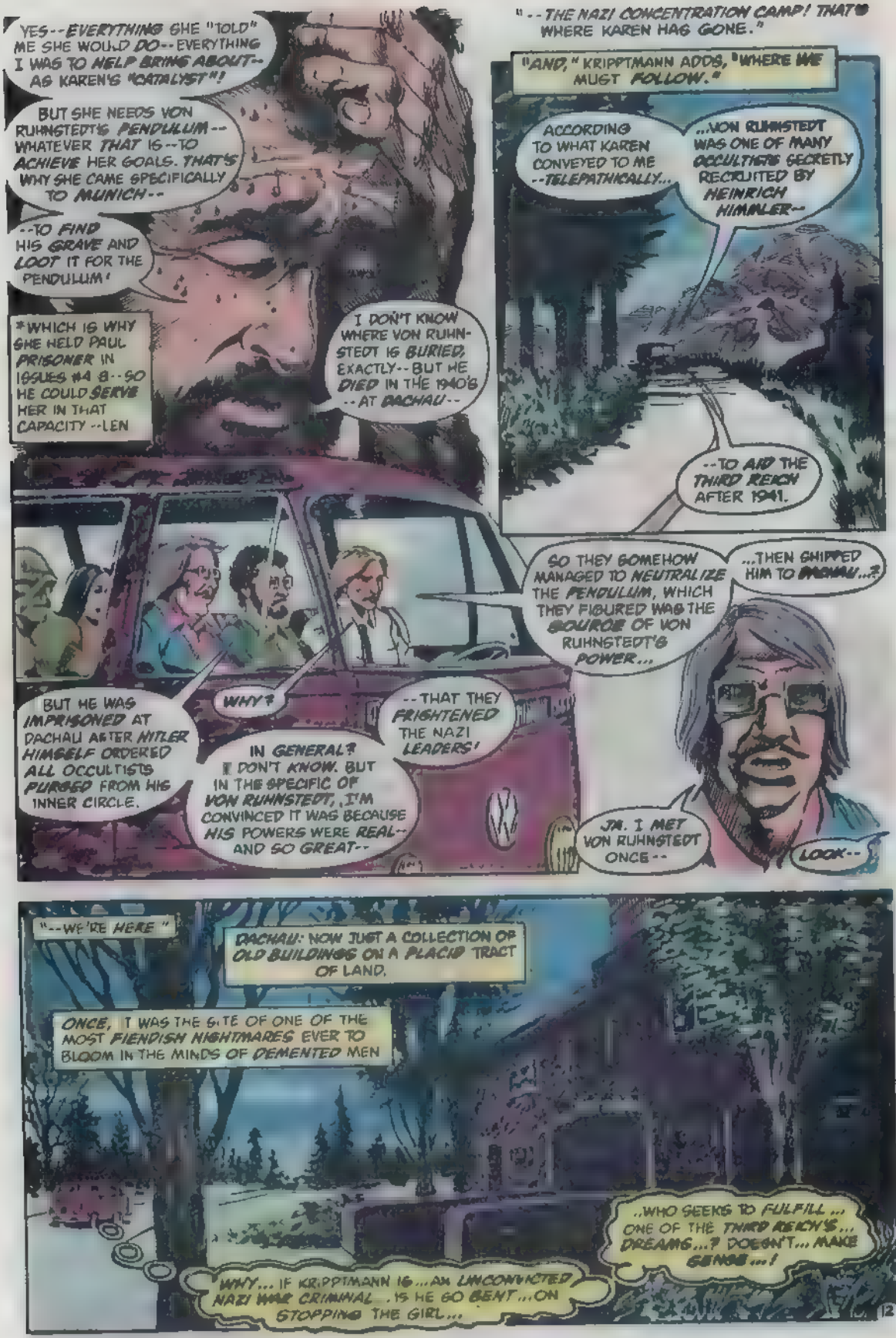

WHILE IN WASHINGTON, ONLY MATTERS OF DEATH ENGAGE THE ATTENTION OF OTHERS:
OUR SURVEILLANCE-DETAIL AT "THE BARCLAY CLINIC" JUST REPORTED IN, GENERAL:
THE CLINIC WAS BROKEN INTO--BY HOLLAND AND TWO UNKNOWNS.
THEY WERE FOLLOWED THERE--BY KAY AND AN "UNAFFILIATED" KNOWN AS MILTON GROSSMAN--
--ALONG WITH AN ENTIRE TEAM OF "UNAFFILIATED" AGENTS WHO APPARENTLY WORK DIRECTLY FOR KAY!*
YOU HAVE ANY OF IT ON TAPE?
*YET AGAIN, LAST ISSUE --LEN
OF COURSE, SIR.
TRANSFER THE TAPE-PLAYBACK TO THE PRIVATE MONITOR IN MY OFFICE.
SO KAY REALLY HAS BEEN PURSUING HIS OWN INTERESTS WHILE WORKING FOR US. I KNEW IT.
CERTAINLY. PEOPLE ARE NEVER REALLY CANDID ABOUT THEIR MOTIVES...
...ARE THEY, GENERAL?
YOU TOLD ME LAST NIGHT YOU HAVE A CONTRACT ON HOLLAND.
THEN I GUESS YOU GUYS [redacted] GAVE A DAMN ABOUT HOLLAN[redacted]'VE FORMULA. YOU WANTED HIM KILLED ALL ALONG!
SO WHY--
--THE PRETENSE? SUPPOSE WE'D LEVELLED WITH YOU?
COULD YOU'VE STOMACHED THINKING OF YOURSELF AS A HIT-MAN? NO.
YOU'RE NO HIRED KILLER, ELLENBECK. SO WE HAD TO BE VERY... CAREFUL HOW WE ... MOTIVATED YOU.
I VIVIDLY REMEMBER OUR MEETING IN MY OFFICE TWO WEEKS AGO...
THE HOLLAND PROJECT--YOU BLEW IT, ELLENBECK. BUT I'M GOING TO GO EASY ON YOU.
YOU KNOW HOW MANY OF THE PEOPLE WHO KNEW OF THE SWAMP THING'S EXISTENCE HAVE... DISAPPEARED?
--SUDDENLY BECOME "NON-PERSONS"?
ALMOST ALL. AND YOU'LL JOIN THEM, ELLENBECK --UNLESS YOU SHAPE UP.
AND YOU DID BUT REMEMBER SOMETHING.
I WON'T PUT UP WITH INSUBORDINATION -NO MATTER WHAT YOUR PERFORMANCE-RECORD. SO WATCH YOUR MOUTH.
I CAN STILL MAKE YOU DISAPPEAR, YOU KNOW.
8

"...I ASSURE YOU--MILTON'S POWERS OF MIND-MANIPULATION ARE SO FORMIDABLE, THERE IS VIRTUALLY NO PROBLEM HE CANNOT HANDLE ADMIRABLY."

POWERS. THE FULL MEANING OF THOSE WORDS BECOMES CLEAR AT DUSK--AS A 300-POUND CRATE FROM THE AIR-CARGO TERMINAL ARRIVES HERE:

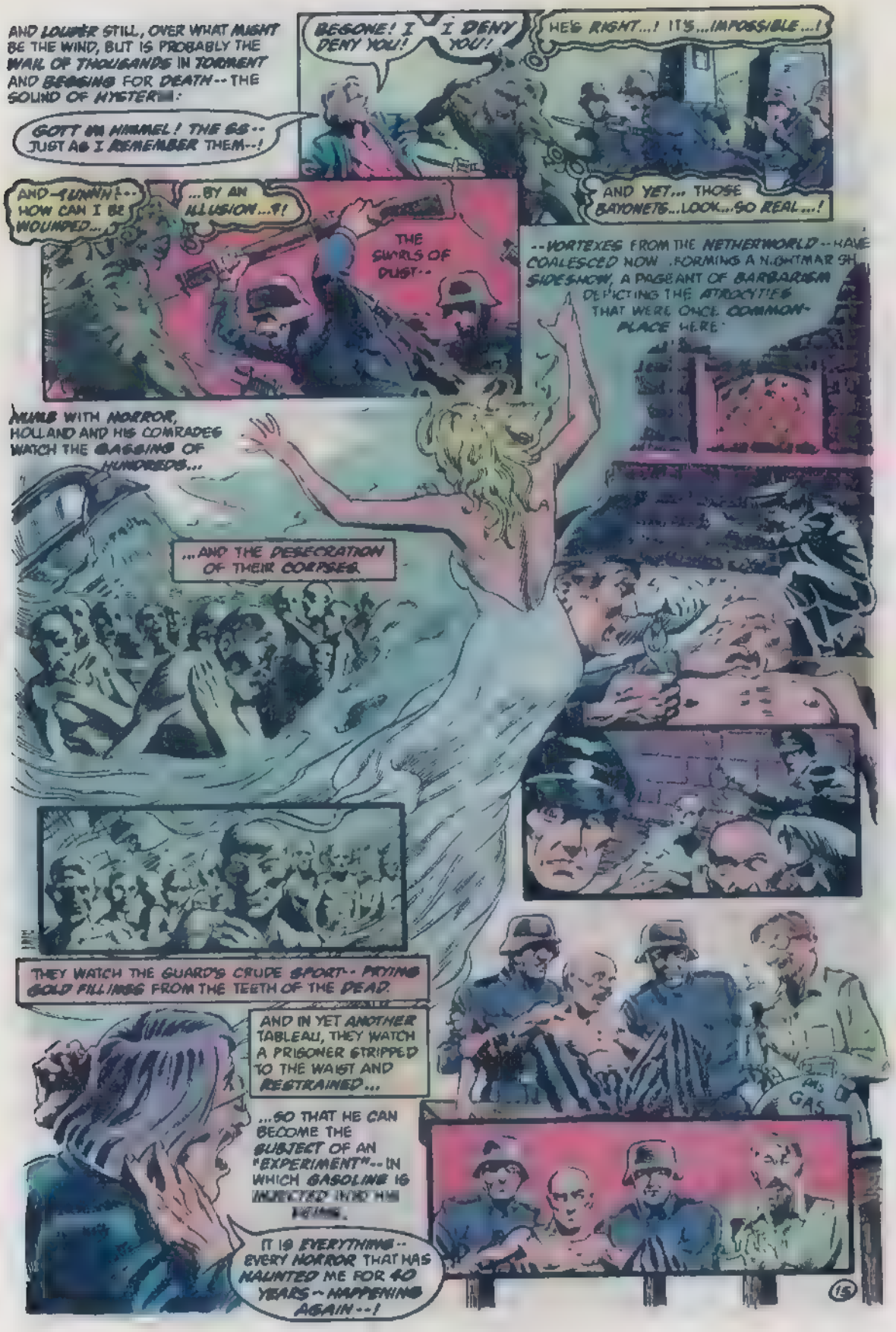
A QUAINT GASTHAUS OVERLOOKING THE CHARMING MARIENPLATZ.
NOT BAD DIGS. I JUST WISH I'D HAD A SAY IN THE ARRANGE-MENTS--
KRIPPTMANN DID HIS BEST, LIZ. THERE WERE ONLY THREE ROOMS AVAILABLE.
WE HAD TO "DOUBLE UP"
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN, AND YOU KNOW IT. IMAGINE HIM "BOOKING" US INTO ONE ROOM TOGETHER--!
HE'S OBVIOUSLY GOT THE WRONG IDEA ABOUT US, DENNIS--AND YOU'VE GOT TO STRAIGHTEN HIM OUT.
GEEZE, I GUESS GROSSMAN'S GOT HIS WORK CUT OUT FOR HIM. HOW ARE WE GONNA KEEP ALEC HIDDEN... HERE?!
♪DEN-NIS...YOU'RE NOT LIS-TEN-ING..!♪
OH, AH-HELLO, DR. KRIPPTMANN...
FRAGILE
I'M GLAD YOU CAME BY, DOCTOR.
I WANT TO ASK YOU SOMETHING: WHAT ARE WE DOING HERE?
WE'RE WAITING FOR FELDNER TO OVERCOME THE TRAUMATIC AMNESIA CAUSED BY HIS BURN-ACCIDENT. I'VE EXPLAINED ALL THIS ALREADY!
HE LEARNED A GREAT DEAL ABOUT THE CLANCY GIRL WHILE HE WAS WITH HER--
YES, I KNOW ALL THAT
WHAT I MEANT WAS-- NO, DOCTOR, WAIT--
WELL...WE CERTAINLY DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT HIM EMBARRASSING US ANY MORE
SLAM
LIZ, I'M SORRY, IT'S JUST...I CAN'T... I MEAN, I DON'T WANNA--I MEAN, WHAT IF WE... I MEAN...
SOUNDS LIKE A SCREAM--!
DAMN
AW, THE HELL WITH IT...
BARCLAY! WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE--
EE-YAAAAHH


I'VE SEEN IT - I'VE SEEN THE FUTURE! IT'S ALL CLEAR NOW-- I REMEMBER!
SHE MUST BE STOPPED--SHE MUST BE--BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE!
IT'LL BE THE HOLOCAUST--IT WILL HAPPEN AGAIN! GENOCIDE...THIS TIME FOR ALL MY PEOPLE--!
IS HE AWAKE? HE SOUNDS DELIRIOUS!
I THINK HE'S BEEN DREAMING--!
AND THEN... FOR ANYONE... ANYONE WHO REFUSES HIM! 666...666!
IN HERE WITH THAT, PLEASE--JUST PUT IT DOWN ANYWHERE.
GROSSMAN, HOW WERE ONLY TWO DELIVERY MEN ABLE TO CARRY A CRATE THAT HEAVY--?
DENNIS! DID YOU KNOW THAT MANY GERMANS SPEAK ENGLISH--
--EVEN BLUE-COLLAR WORKERS--HMM..?
AH-HEM.! I GET THE MESSAGE...
DANKE.
BUT TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION, PERHAPS THEY DON'T THINK IT IS HEAVY. PERHAPS THEY THINK IT WEIGHS NO MORE THAN THE AVERAGE STEAMER-TRUNK...?
I SEE.
AND WHEN THEY... WAKE UP WITH A HERNIA... WON'T THEY... BE SURPRISED...?
WHAT... VON RUHNSTEDT TRIED TO DO FOR HITLER... SHE'LL DO FOR HIM--WHOEVER HE IS. SHE'LL HELP HIM RISE TO POWER...
AND TOGETHER, THEY'LL BEGIN BY FINISHING UP WHERE HITLER LEFT OFF: WITH THE FINAL SOLUTION!
WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?
PAUL! ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
HE WILL BE FINE, MY DEAR. AT LAST, HE'S [redacted] EVERYTHING


YES--EVERYTHING SHE "TOLD" ME SHE WOULD DO--EVERYTHING I WAS TO HELP BRING ABOUT--AS KAREN'S "CATALYST"!
BUT SHE NEEDS VON RUHNSTEDT'S PENDULUM--WHATEVER THAT IS--TO ACHIEVE HER GOALS. THAT'S WHY SHE CAME SPECIFICALLY TO MUNICH--
--TO FIND HIS GRAVE AND LOOT IT FOR THE PENDULUM!
*WHICH IS WHY SHE HELD PAUL PRISONER IN ISSUES #4 & 5--SO HE COULD SERVE HER IN THAT CAPACITY --LEN
I DON'T KNOW WHERE VON RUHNSTEDT IS BURIED, EXACTLY--BUT HE DIED IN THE 1940'S--AT DACHAU--
"--THE NAZI CONCENTRATION CAMP! THAT'S WHERE KAREN HAS GONE."
"AND," KRIPPTMANN ADDS, "WHERE WE MUST FOLLOW."
ACCORDING TO WHAT KAREN CONVEYED TO ME--TELEPATHICALLY--
..VON RUHNSTEDT WAS ONE OF MANY OCCULTISTS SECRETLY RECRUITED BY HEINRICH HIMMLER--
--TO AID THE THIRD REICH AFTER 1941.
SO THEY SOMEHOW MANAGED TO NEUTRALIZE THE PENDULUM, WHICH THEY FIGURED WAS THE SOURCE OF VON RUHNSTEDT'S POWER...
...THEN SHIPPED HIM TO DACHAU...?
BUT HE WAS IMPRISONED AT DACHAU AFTER HITLER HIMSELF ORDERED ALL OCCULTISTS PURGED FROM HIS INNER CIRCLE.
WHY?
IN GENERAL? I DON'T KNOW. BUT IN THE SPECIFIC OF VON RUHNSTEDT, I'M CONVINCED IT WAS BECAUSE HIS POWERS WERE REAL--AND SO GREAT--
--THAT THEY FRIGHTENED THE NAZI LEADERS!
JA. I MET VON RUHNSTEDT ONCE--
LOOK--
"--WE'RE HERE."
DACHAU: NOW JUST A COLLECTION OF OLD BUILDINGS ON A PLACID TRACT OF LAND.
ONCE, IT WAS THE SITE OF ONE OF THE MOST FIENDISH NIGHTMARES EVER TO BLOOM IN THE MINDS OF DEMENTED MEN
..WHO SEEKS TO FULFILL... ONE OF THE THIRD REICH'S... DREAMS...? DOESN'T... MAKE SENSE...!
WHY... IF KRIPPTMANN IS...AN UNCONVICTED NAZI WAR CRIMINAL... IS HE SO BENT...ON STOPPING THE GIRL...

AND THE HORRIFYING, IMPOSSIBLE SCENE THAT GREETS THEM, AS THEIR MICRO-BUS ROUNDS A CORNER, MAKES EVEN LESS:
YOU HAVE SERVED ME WELL THUS FAR, DAVID MARX. BUT YOUR POWER HAS BEEN DEPLETED
ERGO, YOU MUST BE DISPOSED OF
DAVID! OH, MEIN GOTT, DAVID! WHAT DID SHE DO TO YOU?
HE LOOKS LIKE HE'S IN SOME KIND OF TRANCE-- AND IN PAIN.
THERE SHE IS, . KAREN ..! WITH THAT, "OPERATIVE" OF KRIPPTMANN'S...
BUT WHAT . IS SHE DOING...?
..THE ONE SHE TOOK... IN EXCHANGE FOR PAUL...!"
*LAST ISSUE.--LEN
KRIPPTMANN? AND HOLLAND, TOO?! TOO LATE-- YOU CANNOT SAVE YOUR YOUNG FRIEND.
DON'T TOUCH HIM, KRIPPTMANN-- HE COULD BE HURT!
I HAVE SIPHONED OFF HIS "LIFE-FORCE". HE IS VERY SOON TO DIE.
NOW KEEP YOUR DISTANCE--OR YOU SHALL JOIN HIM!
YOU [redacted] NOT FRIGHTEN ME, MONSTER-CHILD.
RACHEL NO...!
BUT THE WARNING COMES TOO LATE, AND OLI AND MUST WATCH IN DUMB HORROR AS A PSIONIC FORCE MORE DREADFUL THAN HE CAN COMPREHEND STRIKES THE WOMAN...
..AND IN AN INSTANT, STRIPS THE FLESH FROM HER BONES!
OH...MY GOD..! IT'S TRUE... IT'S REALLY TRUE...! SHE IS .. SOME KIND OF MONSTER .!

I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS ..! SHE WOULDN'T BE ALIVE TO CAUSE THIS IF I HADN'T SAVED HER !
I'M TO BLAME ..! UNNN!
QUITE SO, HOLLAND IT WAS A RIGHTEOUS CAUSE WHEN HE WHO SIRED ME ATTEMPTED TO END MY MORTAL LIFE... BUT YOU INTERVENED...!
NOW SAVOR THE FRUIT OF YOUR LABOR.
SHE BREATHES FLAME ..?! DEAR LORD ..! SHE HAS POWERS... WE NEVER DREAMED OF...!
FEELS LIKE THAT .. "FIRESTORM" DRIED OUT... EVERY DROP OF SWAMP-WATER ... IN ME ...!
AND IN MY WEAKENED CONDITION?... ONE MORE BLAST LIKE THAT... AND I'LL BE FRIED TO A CRISP...! HAVE ... NO CHOICE BUT TO... BACK OFF...!
AND SO HE DOES THUS HE MUST WATCH HELPLESSLY AS THE WITCH CHILD COMPLETES HER INCANTATION -- AND THE HORROR FACTORY RISES FROM THE DEAD:
FROM NOWHERE, A CHILL, RAGING WIND BLOWS UP AND HOLLAND COULD SWEAR HE CAN SEE THE ASHES OF BODIES LONG DEAD AND SMELL THE STENCH OF CHARNEL WAFTING ON THIS HELLISH BREEZE.
AND THEN HE SEES THE SOLIDIFYING IMAGES, GHOST-LIKE AT FIRST: HERE, A GLINT OF BRASS ON AN SS GUARD'S UNIFORM ...THERE, THE JAGGED WARNING OF BARBED WIRE ...AND, TAPERING SKYWARD, TOWERING OVER ALL LIKE SENTINELS FROM HELL, THE IMMENSE, RED-BRICK MONUMENTS TO HISTORY'S MOST [illegible] HATRED:
THE CREMATORIA
NEIN! NEIN! NOT AGAIN—NOT THIS --!!
*HOLLAND IS DYING OF AN AS YET UNDIAGNOSED AILMENT. --LEN


AND LOWER STILL, OVER WHAT MIGHT BE THE WIND, BUT IS PROBABLY THE WAIL OF THOUSANDS IN TORMENT AND BEGGING FOR DEATH -- THE SOUND OF HYSTER[illegible]:
GOTT IN HIMMEL! THE SS -- JUST AS I REMEMBER THEM --!
BEGONE! I DENY YOU!
I DENY YOU!
HE'S RIGHT...! IT'S...IMPOSSIBLE...!
AND YET... THOSE BAYONETS...LOOK...SO REAL...!
AND -- UNNH! -- HOW CAN I BE WOUNDED...
...BY AN ILLUSION...?!
THE SWIRLS OF DUST --
--VORTEXES FROM THE NETHERWORLD -- HAVE COALESCED NOW, FORMING A NIGHTMARE SIDESHOW, A PAGEANT OF BARBARISM DEPICTING THE ATROCITIES THAT WERE ONCE COMMONPLACE HERE.
MUTE WITH HORROR, HOLLAND AND HIS COMRADES WATCH THE GASSING OF HUNDREDS...
...AND THE DESECRATION OF THEIR CORPSES.
THEY WATCH THE GUARD'S CRUDE SPORT -- PRYING GOLD FILLINGS FROM THE TEETH OF THE DEAD.
AND IN YET ANOTHER TABLEAU, THEY WATCH A PRISONER STRIPPED TO THE WAIST AND RESTRAINED...
...SO THAT HE CAN BECOME THE SUBJECT OF AN "EXPERIMENT" -- IN WHICH GASOLINE IS INJECTED INTO HIS VEINS.
IT IS EVERYTHING -- EVERY HORROR THAT HAS HAUNTED ME FOR 40 YEARS -- HAPPENING AGAIN --!
GAS
15

HAPPENING AGAIN? PERHAPS. BUT THIS TIME, THE HORROR WILL END DIFFERENTLY: IRREVOCABLY.
THAT IS, UNLESS HOLLAND CAN ACT IN TIME.
THE GUARDS... THEY'RE NOT PHANTOMS...! THEY'RE... ANIMATED, "RECONSTRUCTED"... CORPSES...!
GOT TO... STOP THEM...!
ANIMATED CORPSES. THEY ADVANCE MENACINGLY ON KRIPPTMANN AND HIS COMRADES, BACKING THEM TOWARD A DEATH-CHAMBER NEWLY RISEN FROM THE MISTS OF PAINFUL MEMORY.
IT DOES. BUT IT REQUIRES YOUR GUIDANCE, WISE ONE--THE SPARK LIGHT OF YOUR MALEFIC SPIRIT.
BE NOT COY WITH ME, HELL-CHILD. WHAT IT "REQUIRES" IS THE PENDULUM--
WHILE A FEW YARDS DISTANT, ANOTHER CORPSE FORMS FROM WAYWARD MOTES OF DUST AND POWDERED BONE -- THAT OF A MAN WHO, IN LIFE, WAS CLEARLY MAD
--THAT WHICH WAS STOLEN FROM ME, ERE MY LIFE WAS STOLEN... AND BY THE SELFSAME HANDS.
YOU MUST SEARCH FURTHER FOR IT--
--IN THAT REGION KNOWN AS BERCHTESGADEN. THERE DWELLS ONE WHO HARBORS A DARK SECRET: A COLLECTION OF "MEMENTOES" FROM THE DAYS OF INFAMY.
AMONG THESE WILL YOU FIND THE PENDULUM. GO--AND TAKE IT FROM THAT FOOL WHO SCARCE SUSPECTS ITS POWER!
BUT EVEN AS THE GIRL SEEKS THE COUNSEL OF HER ADVISOR FROM BEYOND THE VEIL,
WHO SUMMONS ERNST VON RUHNSTEDT? WHO DISTURBS HIS ETERNAL REPOSE?
I, WISE ONE. THE HERALD OF THIS AGE
BACK...! GET BACK... DAMN YOU..!
OBSERVE, VON RUHNSTEDT--THEY ARE MORE RESOURCEFUL THAN I HAD GUESSED. BUT I MUST BE FREE TO CONTINUE MY WORK--
SO...AT LAST, IT HAPPENS AGAIN. THE ANCIENT DESTINY VIES ONCE MORE FOR FULFILLMENT.
IT WILL TAKE STRONGER MEASURES TO CONTAIN THEM
SO BE IT.
WITHOUT WARNING, THE CHILD-MADE-SHE-DEMON UNLEASHES AN AVALANCHE OF PSIONIC FURY
IN A BLINK OF HER COLD EYES, THE CREMATORIUM IS A FLURRY OF RUBBLE.

9 P.M. ON THE 1ST -- IN GENERAL SUNDERLAND'S OFFICE AT SUNDERLAND HQ.
THIS TAPE WAS MADE AT THE BARCLAY CLINIC LAST NIGHT? THIS IS
KAY TOLD US THE TREMAYNE WOMAN WAS DEAD!
GOOD GOD, ELLENBECK--
--WHAT SHE KNOWS ABOUT US NOW-- COVERT OPERATIONS -- THE RECEPTORS -- ALL HIGHLY CLASSIFIED HIGHLY SENSITIVE! AND TO ADD INSULT TO INJURY--
--WE LEARN THAT KAY BETRAYED US.. LIED TO US!
WE HAVE NO OTHER CHOICE, THEN
NO SIR I'LL BE ON THE NEXT FLIGHT OUT...
"...AND BY THE TIME I RETURN, KRIPPTMANN AND HIS ASSISTANT..BARCLAY, TREMAYNE, HOLLAND-- THE WHOLE BUNCH...WILL BE TERMINATED."
NO SIGN OF KAREN...! WE'VE LOST HER AGAIN...!
I'LL HAVE TO USE THE LOCKET TO GET A "FIX", ON HER!
*THE LOCKET, WHICH ONCE BELONGED TO KAREN, INEXPLICABLY GIVES HOLLAND THE ABILITY TO "HOME IN" ON HER. --LEN
WELL, WE HEARD WHERE SHE WAS GOING. BUT AFTER THAT LAST DISPLAY OF POWER, I'M AFRAID THERE IS NOW ONLY ONE WAY TO STOP HER.
DENNIS, ONCE AGAIN I MUST BEG YOUR CO-OPERATION--
FORGET IT. NO MORE. NOT AFTER THE HORRORS WE JUST WITNESSED.
REALLY? PROVE IT.
NOT A HARD THING TO DO
...HORRORS YOU WERE ONCE A PART OF! GOD, KRIPPTMANN, YOU'RE MORE OF A MONSTER THAN ALEC IS!
STILL YOU BELIEVE I WAS A NAZI? STILL YOU DO NOT SEE THAT YOU COULD NOT BE MORE WRONG?
A 436724
OH, MY GOD.

NEXT: NIGHT OF THE GOLEM! 17

The SAGA of the
SWAMP THING
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO. 11
MAR.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
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THE DACHAU MEMORIAL, WEST GERMANY -- DAWN.
THE RUBBLE OF A CREMATORIUM IS THE ONLY REMAINING EVIDENCE OF THE SWAMP THING'S BATTLE HERE.
NOW, HIS LIFE AND THOSE OF HIS COMPANIONS HAVE BEEN REDUCED TO RUBBLE -- AS TWISTED AND JUMBLED AS THE STONE AND METAL STREWN BENEATH THEIR FEET
CREATED BY LEN WEIN & BERNI WRIGHTSON
RECALLING HOW HE CAME TO THIS MOMENT, THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR ALEC HOLLAND IS REMINDED OF AN OLD SAYING-
SOMETIMES, YOU DON'T KNOW WHERE YOU'RE GOING TILL YOU GET THERE.
TO ALEC HOLLAND, IT SEEMS HIS JOURNEY HAS ONLY JUST BEGUN.
HEART OF STONE, FEET OF CLAY

J-8508

A MARTIN PASKO writer . TOM YEATES artist . LEN WEIN editor presentation.

ASSISTED BY TATSANA WOOD - colorist JOHN COSTANZA - letterer

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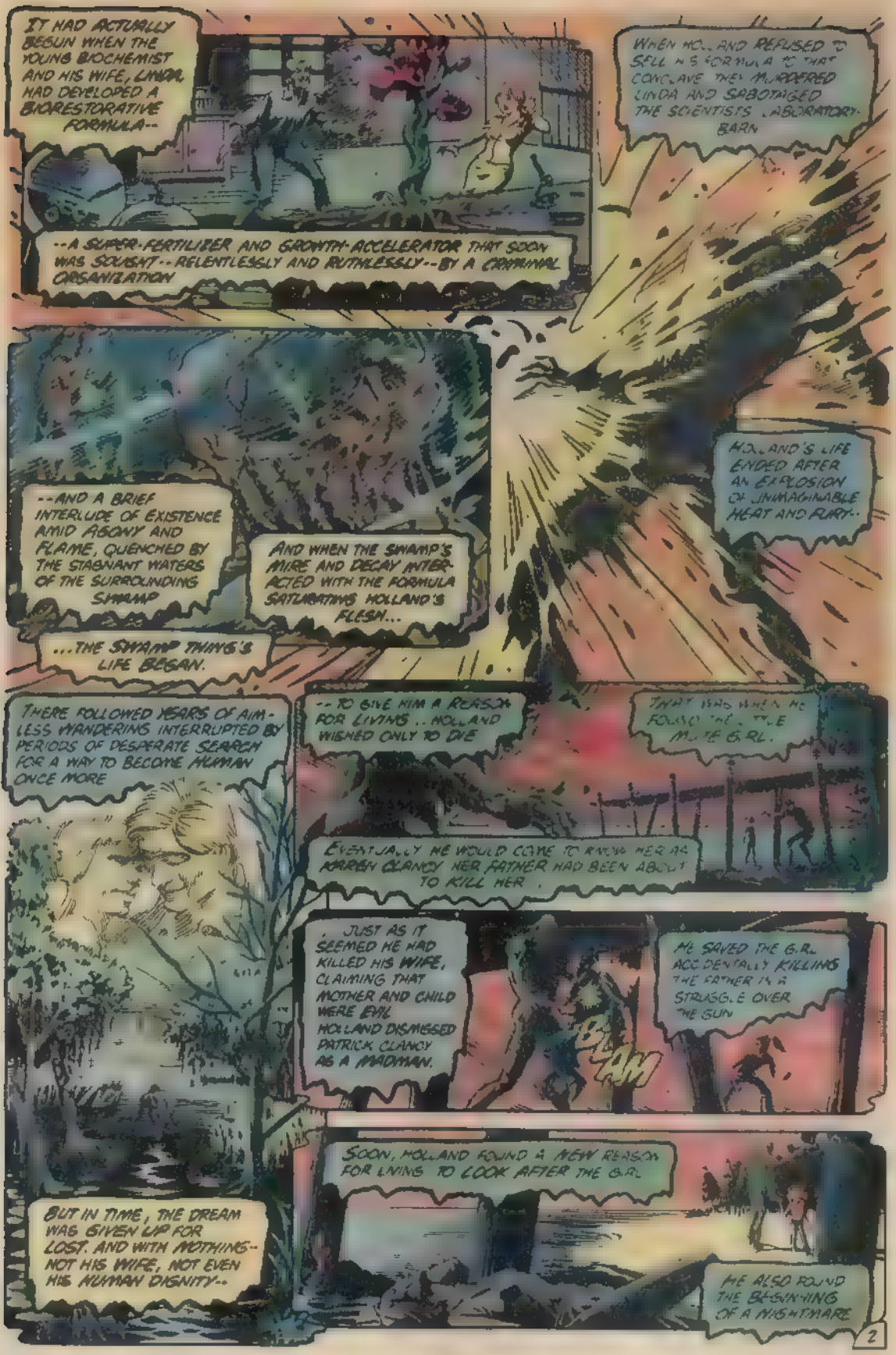
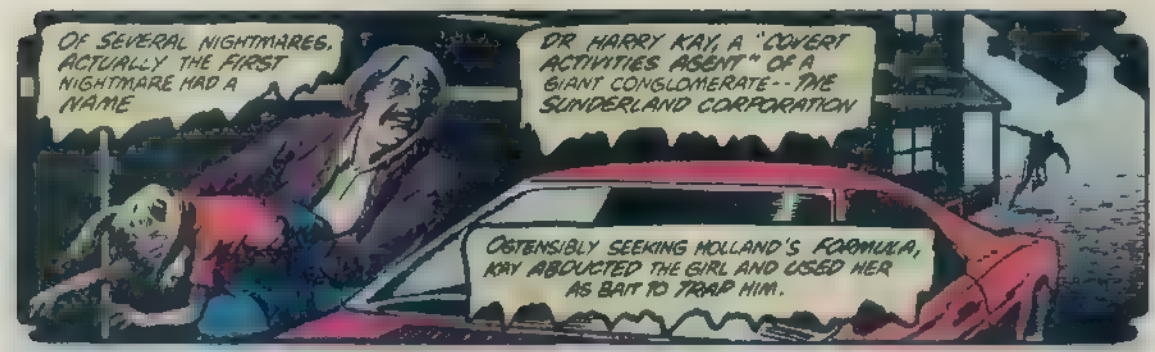
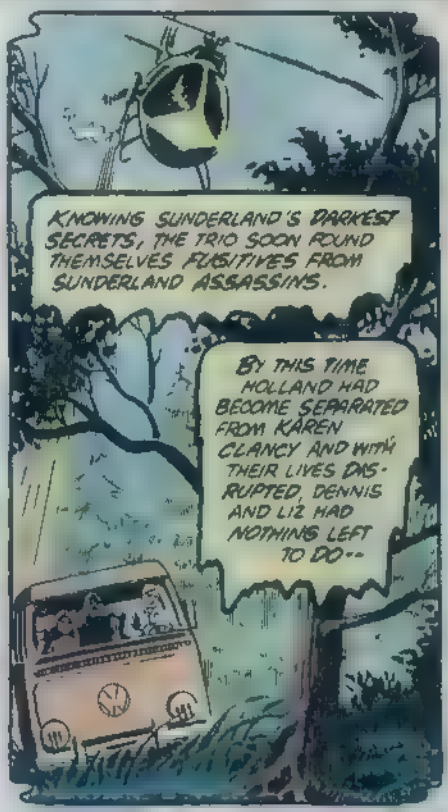
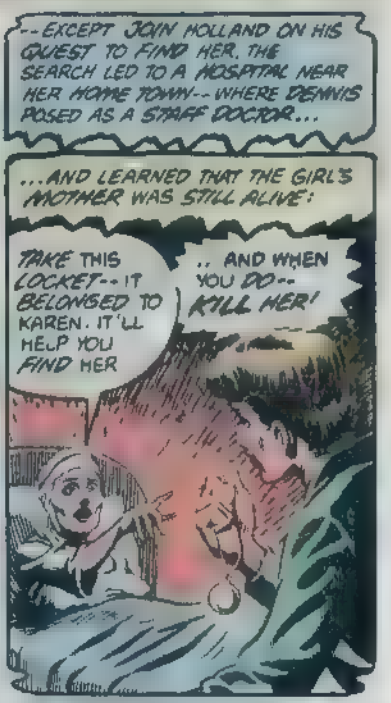

IT HAD ACTUALLY BEGUN WHEN THE YOUNG BIOCHEMIST AND HIS WIFE, LINDA, HAD DEVELOPED A BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA--
--A SUPER-FERTILIZER AND GROWTH-ACCELERATOR THAT SOON WAS SOUGHT--RELENTLESSLY AND RUTHLESSLY--BY A CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION
WHEN MC... AND REFUSED TO SELL HIS FORMULA TO THAT CONCLAVE THEY MURDERED LINDA AND SABOTAGED THE SCIENTIST'S LABORATORY-BARN
--AND A BRIEF INTERLUDE OF EXISTENCE AMID AGONY AND FLAME, QUENCHED BY THE STAGNANT WATERS OF THE SURROUNDING SWAMP
AND WHEN THE SWAMP'S MIRE AND DECAY INTERACTED WITH THE FORMULA SATURATING HOLLAND'S FLESH...
...THE SWAMP THING'S LIFE BEGAN.
HOLLAND'S LIFE ENDED AFTER AN EXPLOSION OF UNIMAGINABLE HEAT AND FURY..
THERE FOLLOWED YEARS OF AIMLESS WANDERING INTERRUPTED BY PERIODS OF DESPERATE SEARCH FOR A WAY TO BECOME HUMAN ONCE MORE
--TO GIVE HIM A REASON FOR LIVING.. HOLLAND WISHED ONLY TO DIE
THAT WAS WHEN HE FOUND THE LITTLE MUTE GIRL.
EVENTUALLY HE WOULD COME TO KNOW HER AS KAREN CLANCY HER FATHER HAD BEEN ABOUT TO KILL HER.
JUST AS IT SEEMED HE HAD KILLED HIS WIFE, CLAIMING THAT MOTHER AND CHILD WERE EVIL HOLLAND DISMISSED PATRICK CLANCY AS A MADMAN.
BLAM
HE SAVED THE G.R. ACCIDENTALLY KILLING THE FATHER IN A STRUGGLE OVER THE GUN
SOON, HOLLAND FOUND A NEW REASON FOR LIVING TO LOOK AFTER THE G.R.
BUT IN TIME, THE DREAM WAS GIVEN UP FOR LOST. AND WITH NOTHING--NOT HIS WIFE, NOT EVEN HIS HUMAN DIGNITY--
HE ALSO FOUND THE BEGINNING OF A NIGHTMARE
2


OF SEVERAL NIGHTMARES, ACTUALLY THE FIRST NIGHTMARE HAD A NAME
DR HARRY KAY, A "COVERT ACTIVITIES AGENT" OF A GIANT CONGLOMERATE--THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION
OSTENSIBLY SEEKING HOLLAND'S FORMULA, KAY ABDUCTED THE GIRL AND USED HER AS BAIT TO TRAP HIM.

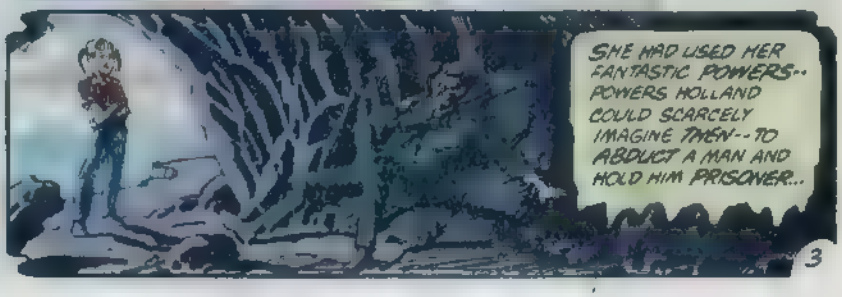
SOME TIME LATER, HOLLAND CROSSED THE PATH OF JOURNALIST LIZABETH TREMAYNE
SHE ENCOUNTERED A BADLY-INJURED "SWAMP THING" AND ARRANGED FOR HIM TO BE TREATED AT A PRIVATE CLINIC OWNED BY HER EMPLOYERS.
...THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION!

THERE, THEY MET THE SUPERVISING PHYSICIAN, DENNIS BARCLAY, AND LEARNED THAT THE CLINIC WAS ACTUALLY RUN BY HARRY KAY.
HOLLAND WALKED INTO ANOTHER NIGHTMARE THE CLINIC WAS THE SITE OF CERTAIN SECRET--AND VERY BIZARRE--EXPERIMENTS.


KNOWING SUNDERLAND'S DARKEST SECRETS, THE TRIO SOON FOUND THEMSELVES FUGITIVES FROM SUNDERLAND ASSASSINS.
BY THIS TIME HOLLAND HAD BECOME SEPARATED FROM KAREN CLANCY AND WITH THEIR LIVES DISRUPTED, DENNIS AND LIZ HAD NOTHING LEFT TO DO--


--EXCEPT JOIN HOLLAND ON HIS QUEST TO FIND HER. THE SEARCH LED TO A HOSPITAL NEAR HER HOME TOWN--WHERE DENNIS POSED AS A STAFF DOCTOR...
...AND LEARNED THAT THE GIRL'S MOTHER WAS STILL ALIVE!
TAKE THIS LOCKET--IT BELONGED TO KAREN. IT'LL HELP YOU FIND HER
.. AND WHEN YOU DO--KILL HER!

YET ANOTHER NIGHTMARE! HOLLAND'S FIRST INKLING THAT THERE MIGHT HAVE BEEN SOMETHING STRANGE ABOUT THE GIRL AFTER ALL..

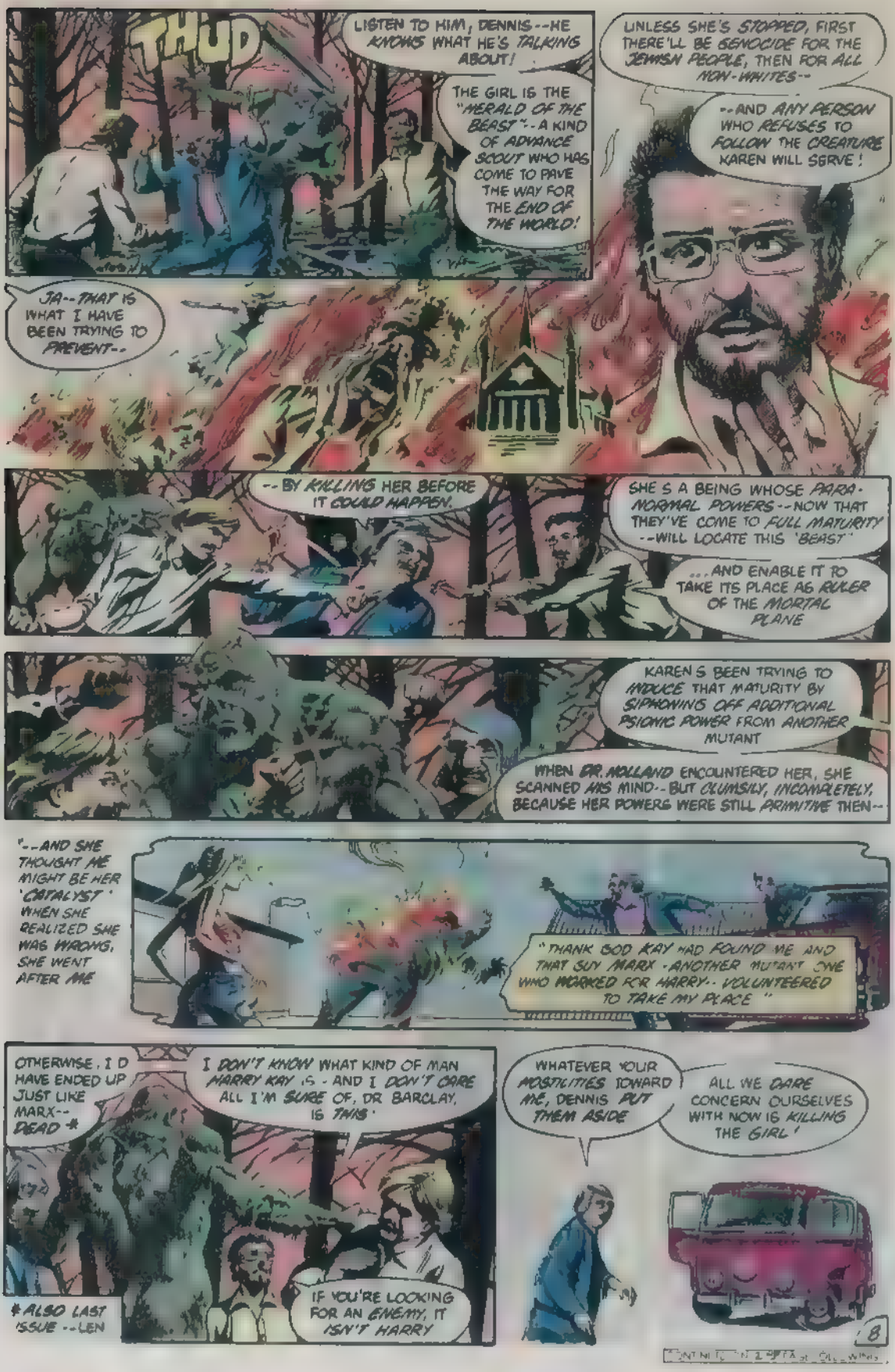


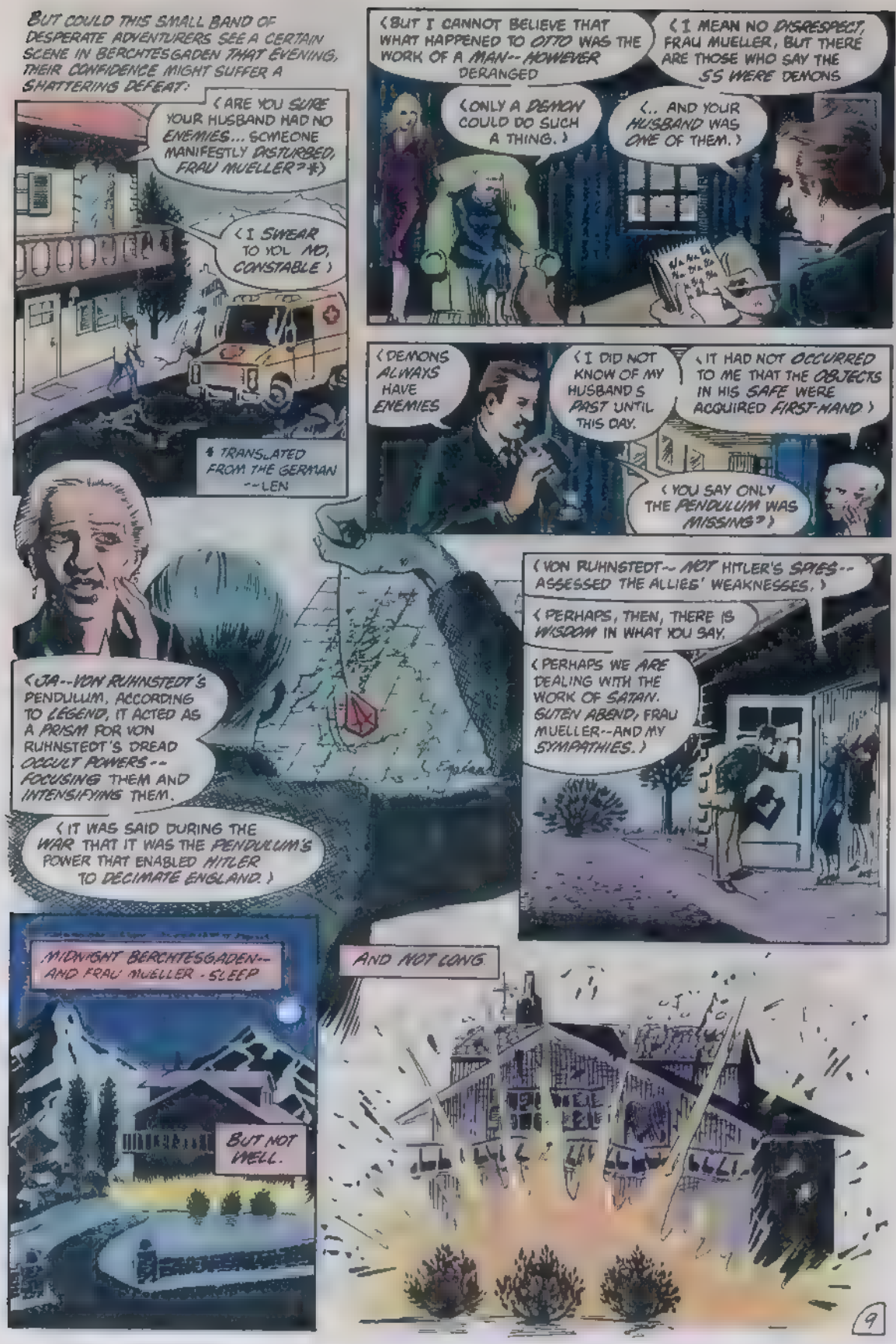
FOR REASONS WHICH ARE NOT ENTIRELY CLEAR TO HOLLAND--YET
ONLY THE MAN WHO WAS KAREN CLANCY'S CAPTIVE--THIS MAN, PAUL PELOQUIN--FULLY UNDERSTANDS WHAT SHE IS AND HE WANTS TO MAKE THE SWAMP THING UNDERSTAND.
KAREN SOME KIND OF MONSTER...?
STILL.. MY MIND. RESISTS IT
DR. HOLLAND!
I REALIZE HOW DIFFICULT IT MUST BE FOR YOU TO ACCEPT ALL THIS THE GIRL SEEMED SO...SO INNOCENT--!
BUT THAT CHILD DOESN'T EXIST I'M NOT SURE SHE EVER REALLY DID
BUT ONE THING'S CERTAIN SHE'S NO CHILD ANY MORE I KNOW--I WATCHED HER CHANGE.
LET ME EXPLAIN.
BUT I'D BETTER BEGIN AT THE BEGINN--
DR HOLLAND? DR HOLLAND, WHAT'S WRONG?!
IT'S THE LOCKET THE LOCKET WITH ITS AS-YET UNEXPLAINED POWER TO MYSTICALLY IMPART AN IMPRESSION OF THE GIRL'S WHEREABOUTS--CALLING TO HIM ONCE MORE.
IT IS AS IF HIS NERVOUS SYSTEM WERE JOINED WITH HERS.
SUDDENLY... A SHIVER: THE BRISK ALPINE AIR AS THE GIRL DESCENDS TOWARD A HOUSE ON A SLOPE OF MOUNT UNTERSBERG IN BERCHTES-GADEN--
HOLLAND'S OWN BODY SEEMS TO BECOME INCORPOREAL AS SHE STEPS THROUGH A STRANGER'S WALLS
AND HIS EYES BLAZE, TOO, AS SOME DARK INTUITION HE CANNOT UNDERSTAND STEERS THE CHILD-MADE-SHE-DEMON UNERR NGLY--
--BORNE ALOFT BY HER OWN AWESOME PSYCHO-KINETIC POWER.
--TOWARD A WALL-SAFE
4

THE MASTER OF THE HOUSE HIDES HIS SECRET LIFE WITHIN THIS SAFE
LONG AGO AND FAR AWAY, HE HAD BEEN ONE OF HITLER'S SS AT DACHAU HE HAD ESCAPED THE ALLIED TRIBUNALS, NARROWLY ELUDED THE TRIALS AT NÜRNBERG.
BUT NOT WITHOUT HIS MEMENTOES OF HIS YEARS OF SERVICE TO DER FUHRER
TO HELL, OTTO
ONE OF WHICH IS THE OBJECT KAREN CLANCY SEEKS
THE PENDULUM OF ERNST VON RUHNSTEDT.
(WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH--
(?! MY TREASURES! MY SECRET TREASURES! NO--PUT THEM DOWN!
(NO ONE MUST SEE THEM!*)
* TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN--LEN
YAAAHHH
AAAAAA
DR. HOLLAND!
HAD TO WILL MYSELF . TO BREAK THE PSIONIC CONTACT...!
COULDN'T ENDURE. "OBSERVING" THAT.. ATROCITY! I'LL BE..
ALL RIGHT... NOW
I . I KNOW ABOUT THE LOCKET DURING MY CAPTIVITY, SHE "TOLD" ME MUCH ABOUT HERSELF - THROUGH TELEPATHY, I THINK .
5

...AND TELEPATHY IS THE LEAST OF WHAT SHE CAN DO.
SHE'S ALSO PSYCHOKINETIC-- SHE CAN MOVE OBJECTS WITH HER MIND. EVEN START FIRES
I DON'T THINK SHE WAS EVER REALLY HUMAN.
NO.. A MUTANT ! FREAK OF NATURE
YES... AND, AS WITH ANY ABILITIES A PERSON'S BORN WITH, HERS GREW STRONGER AS SHE GREW OLDER.
BUT SHE'S BEEN TRYING TO HASTEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HER MUTANT-POWERS-- BY PSYCHOKINETICALLY INDUCING HER PHYSICAL MATURATION.
SPEEDING UP. HER OWN GROWTH PROCESS. ! OF COURSE ..'
NOW HER MATURATION IS COMPLETED.
WHICH IS WHAT HARRY KAY'S BEEN TRYING TO PREVENT--
KAY.. ! STRANGE HARRY KAY OR "HELMUT KRIAPTMANN"..! WHATEVER HIS NAME IS
. I'VE NEVER KNOWN ANYONE LIKE HIM...!
JUST WHEN I DECIDE . HE'S WORTH HATING... JUST WHEN I THINK I'VE GOT HIM FIGURED OUT..
...HE SHOWS SOME OTHER PREVIOUSLY HIDDEN.. SIDE OF HIMSELF... AND THEN. . I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO THINK...!
AT THE MOMENT, NEITHER DOES DENNIS BARCLAY
UNDERSTAND NOW? DO YOU UNDERSTAND WHY IT FILLS ME WITH SUCH RAGE, THAT YOU SHOULD THINK I WAS A NAZI?
THAT...THAT NUMBER-- TATTOOED ON YOUR ARM-- IT'S AN IDENTIFICATION-NUMBER... OF...OF ..
.. A CONCENTRATION CAMP INMATE!
YOU RE JEWISH ? YOU SURVIVED THE CAMPS...?
JA I WAS A KAPO.
A KAPO-- A "TRUSTEE" PRISONER? IN OTHER WORDS, YOU COLLABORATED WITH THE NAZIS-- AIDED THEM IN CARRYING OUT THEIR ATROCITIES AGAINST YOUR OWN PEOPLE?
TAKE CARE, MEIN OLD FRIEND...

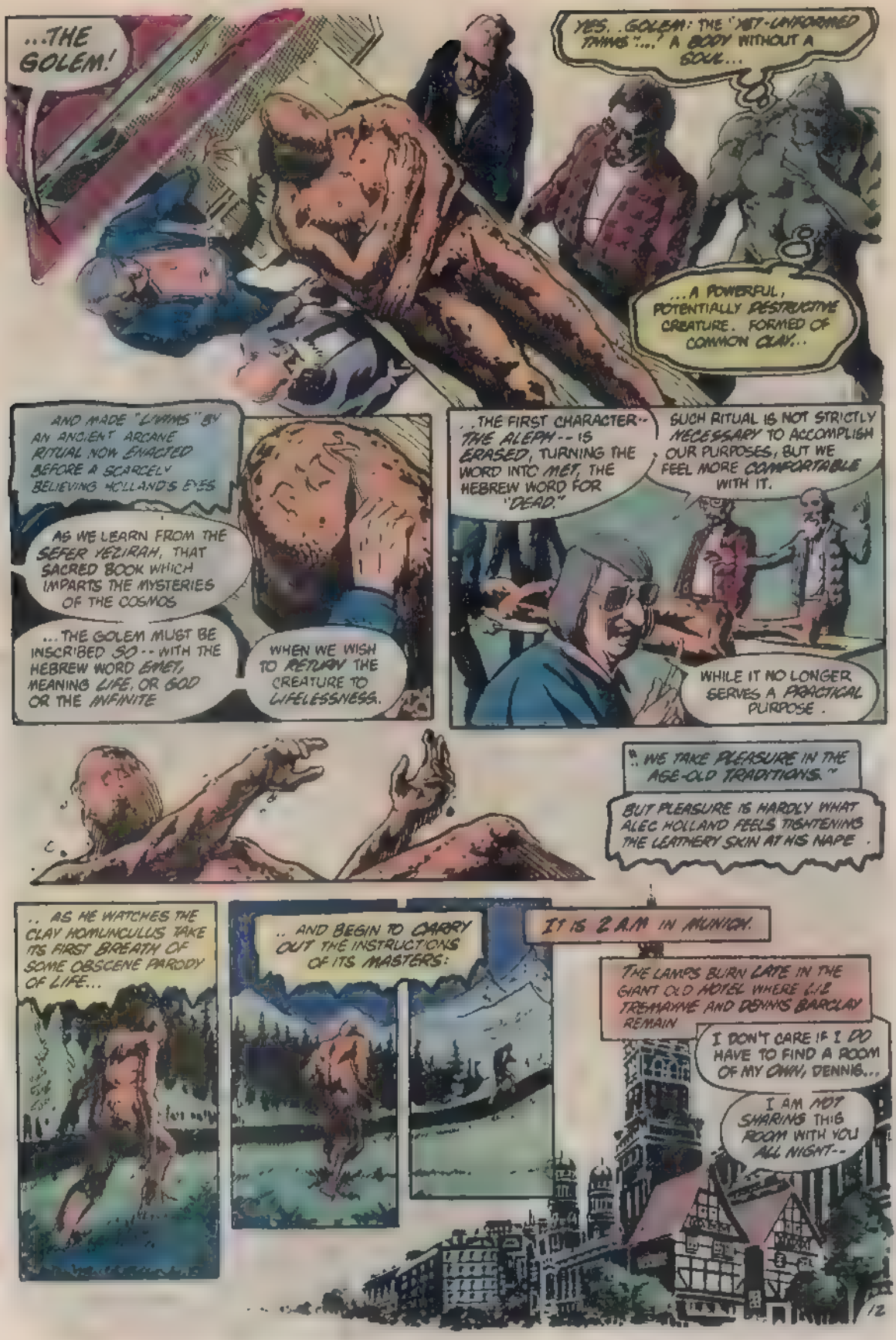
...YOU GO TOO FAR YOU DO NOT KNOW OF WHAT YOU SPEAK.
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO CHANGE MY MIND ABOUT YOU?
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO EARN MY TRUST?
FORGET IT, KRIPPTMAN. I THOUGHT YOU WERE SCUM BEFORE, AND I STILL THINK YOU'RE SCUM--
NO.. NO!
WHAT GUILT I FEEL OVER WHAT I DID-- OR DID NOT DO-- IS MY AFFAIR... AND MINE ALONE!
FOR 40 YEARS I HAVE STRUGGLED TO RID MYSELF OF MY PRIVATE DEMONS--
--BY MAKING RESTITUTION FOR THE PAST, IN MY OWN WAY--
BARCLAY! WHAT ARE YOU DOING?
LEAVE HIM ALONE! HE'S NOT YOUR ENEMY-- HONEST TO GOD, HE'S NOT!
HE STARTED IT!
MAYBE HE DID..
--AND YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO JUDGE ME--; AGGH!
DENNIS! FOR GOD'S SAKE, STOP IT! HE'S AN OLD MAN--
--YOU'LL KILL HIM!
HUM...? SOUNDS LIKE ..TROUBLE BACK THERE .'
. BUT I'M... GOING TO FINISH IT. !
YOU SAW THE HORRORS THE GIRL IS CAPABLE OF, DENNIS! *
IF SHE ACHIEVES HER GOAL, THIS TIME THERE WILL BE A HOLOCAUST! MORE THAN SIX MILLION WILL DIE-- 'UNNH'!
* LAST ISSUE. -- LEN.

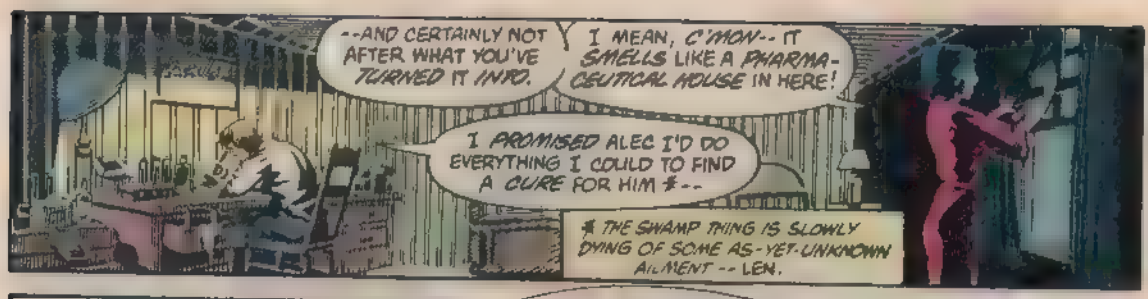

THUD
LISTEN TO HIM, DENNIS--HE KNOWS WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT!
THE GIRL IS THE "HERALD OF THE BEAST"--A KIND OF ADVANCE SCOUT WHO HAS COME TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE END OF THE WORLD!
UNLESS SHE'S STOPPED, FIRST THERE'LL BE GENOCIDE FOR THE JEWISH PEOPLE, THEN FOR ALL NON-WHITES--
--AND ANY PERSON WHO REFUSES TO FOLLOW THE CREATURE KAREN WILL SERVE!
JA--THAT IS WHAT I HAVE BEEN TRYING TO PREVENT--
--BY KILLING HER BEFORE IT COULD HAPPEN.
SHE'S A BEING WHOSE PARA-NORMAL POWERS--NOW THAT THEY'VE COME TO FULL MATURITY--WILL LOCATE THIS 'BEAST'
...AND ENABLE IT TO TAKE ITS PLACE AS RULER OF THE MORTAL PLANE
KAREN'S BEEN TRYING TO INDUCE THAT MATURITY BY SIPHONING OFF ADDITIONAL PSIONIC POWER FROM ANOTHER MUTANT
WHEN DR. MOLLAND ENCOUNTERED HER, SHE SCANNED HIS MIND--BUT CLUMSILY, INCOMPLETELY, BECAUSE HER POWERS WERE STILL PRIMITIVE THEN--
"--AND SHE THOUGHT ME MIGHT BE HER 'CATALYST' WHEN SHE REALIZED SHE WAS WRONG, SHE WENT AFTER ME
"THANK GOD KAY HAD FOUND ME AND THAT GUY MARX--ANOTHER MUTANT ONE WHO WORKED FOR HARRY--VOLUNTEERED TO TAKE MY PLACE"
OTHERWISE, I'D HAVE ENDED UP JUST LIKE MARX--DEAD *
I DON'T KNOW WHAT KIND OF MAN MARRY KAY IS--AND I DON'T CARE ALL I'M SURE OF, DR BARCLAY, IS THIS:
IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR AN ENEMY, IT ISN'T HARRY
WHATEVER YOUR HOSTILITIES TOWARD ME, DENNIS PUT THEM ASIDE
ALL WE DARE CONCERN OURSELVES WITH NOW IS KILLING THE GIRL!
* ALSO LAST ISSUE --LEN
8


BUT COULD THIS SMALL BAND OF DESPERATE ADVENTURERS SEE A CERTAIN SCENE IN BERCHTESGADEN THAT EVENING, THEIR CONFIDENCE MIGHT SUFFER A SHATTERING DEFEAT:
(ARE YOU SURE YOUR HUSBAND HAD NO ENEMIES... SOMEONE MANIFESTLY DISTURBED, FRAU MUELLER?*)
(I SWEAR TO YOU, NO, CONSTABLE.)
* TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN --LEN
(BUT I CANNOT BELIEVE THAT WHAT HAPPENED TO OTTO WAS THE WORK OF A MAN-- HOWEVER DERANGED
(I MEAN NO DISRESPECT, FRAU MUELLER, BUT THERE ARE THOSE WHO SAY THE SS WERE DEMONS
(ONLY A DEMON COULD DO SUCH A THING.)
(.. AND YOUR HUSBAND WAS ONE OF THEM.)
(DEMONS ALWAYS HAVE ENEMIES
(I DID NOT KNOW OF MY HUSBAND'S PAST UNTIL THIS DAY.
(IT HAD NOT OCCURRED TO ME THAT THE OBJECTS IN HIS SAFE WERE ACQUIRED FIRST-HAND.)
(YOU SAY ONLY THE PENDULUM WAS MISSING?)
(JA--VON RUHNSTEDT'S PENDULUM, ACCORDING TO LEGEND, IT ACTED AS A PRISM FOR VON RUHNSTEDT'S DREAD OCCULT POWERS-- FOCUSING THEM AND INTENSIFYING THEM.
(IT WAS SAID DURING THE WAR THAT IT WAS THE PENDULUM'S POWER THAT ENABLED HITLER TO DECIMATE ENGLAND.)
(VON RUHNSTEDT-- NOT HITLER'S SPIES-- ASSESSED THE ALLIES' WEAKNESSES.)
(PERHAPS, THEN, THERE IS WISDOM IN WHAT YOU SAY.
(PERHAPS WE ARE DEALING WITH THE WORK OF SATAN. GUTEN ABEND, FRAU MUELLER--AND MY SYMPATHIES.)
MIDNIGHT BERCHTESGADEN-- AND FRAU MUELLER - SLEEP
BUT NOT WELL.
AND NOT LONG
9

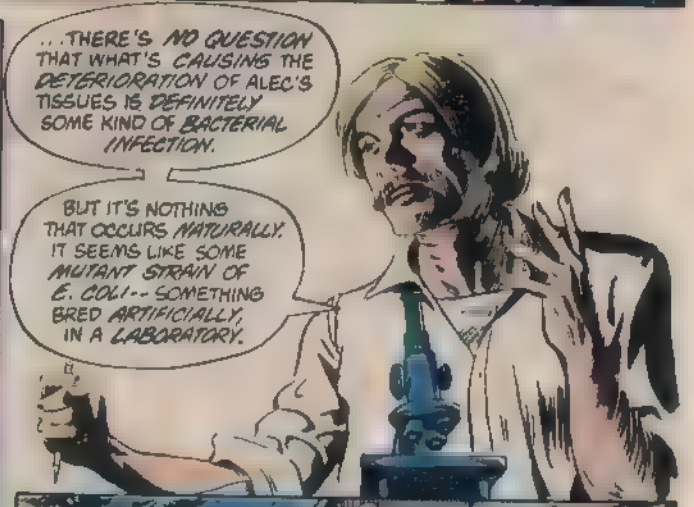
THE "DEMON" ABOUT WHICH FRAU MUELLER HAD THEORIZED HAS COME TO MAKE A PERSONAL APPEARANCE
EEEEEEEEE
(YOU WERE MORE CORRECT ABOUT THE PENDULUM THAN YOU HAD GUESSED, FRAU MUELLER
(AND IN THE HANDS OF ONE AS POWERFUL AS VON RUHNSTEDT--IF NOT MORESO--IT IS JUST AS DEADLY)
(WH-WHO ARE YOU? WHAT DO YOU WANT HERE?)
DO NOT TROUBLE YOURSELF. YOU SHALL NOT LIVE LONG ENOUGH TO LEARN NOW IS THE HOUR OF YOUR DEATH.)
(BUT WHY. WHY..?)
(I REQUIRE THIS BUILDING YOUR HOUSE.)
YA
AAAAA
THERE IS A SOUND LIKE THE SCREAM OF SOME UNSEEN, DEMONIC CHORUS, CONSUMED BY THE FIRES OF PERDITION--
--THE EXPLOSIVE RENDING OF TIMBERS AND STONE AS THE HOUSES OUTER SHELL CRACKS APART COMPLETELY--TO REVEAL A NEWER STRUCTURE "MYSTICALLY" CREATED
-- THE FORTRESS OF THE BEAST.

AT THAT MOMENT, IN THE SHADOW OF MOUNT KEHLSTEIN 25 MILES DISTANT.
JUST AS WELL THAT KRIPPTMANN ASSISTED DENNIS AND LIZ GO BACK TO MUNICH..
IF I UNDERSTAND HIS PLAN.. CORRECTLY IT WOULD PROBABLY BE TOO ROUGH FOR THEM, ANYWAY
DO NOT FEAR THE POWER OF THE [redacted] WE CREATE THIS NIGHT MEIN KINDER
REMEMBER THAT IF THE GIRL IS PERMITTED TO [redacted] HER WORK, THE WORLD WILL LIE IN RUINS--
--AND BE DOMINATED BY THE HORRIFYING EVIL OF "THE BEAST."
WHAT.. IS 'BEAST..'?
I'M NOT SURE WHAT IT CALLS ITSELF...
BUT IN CHRISTIAN DOCTRINE, THE CREATURE IS KNOWN AS...THE ANTICHRIST.
CALL IT... THE "ANTIMESSIAH," IF YOU WILL-- THE "BEAST" WHOSE "NUMBER" IS 666
THAT'S FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT-- "REVELATIONS"-- THOUGH 'REVELATIONS' DOESN'T SPEAK OF A "HERALD OF THE BEAST"
BUT THE HERALDS EXIST THEY'VE EXISTED BEFORE
--IN ALMOST 40 YEARS. THE LAST ONE WAS ERNST VON RUHNSTEDT
WHEN KAREN SUCCEEDS IN IDENTIFYING AND "PREPARING THE WAY" FOR "HER" BEAST. SHE'LL SERVE IT--
--WHOEVER OR WHATEVER IT MIGHT BE.
YES. MANY TIMES IN THE PAST AN "ANTIMESSIAH" HAS TRIED TO BRING ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD AND FAILED
BUT THERE HASN'T BEEN A "HERALD"-- A MUTANT OF KAREN'S "TYPE" AS POWERFUL AS SHE IS--
--THE WAY VON RUHNSTEDT WANTED TO SERVE HITLER Y KNOW MANY PEOPLE THOUGHT HITLER WAS THE 'ANTICHRIST.'"
EVIDENTLY VON RUHNSTEDT THOUGHT SO, TOO--
NO MATTER NOW WE ARE PREPARED FOR THEM, MY ASSISTANTS HERE [redacted] GREAT CARE
SOME OF THEM HAVE MUTANT-POWERS AS MILTON DOES
BUT ONE THING WE ALL HAVE IN COMMON WE ARE EXPERTS IN THE ANCIENT JEWISH ART OF MYSTICISM KNOWN AS THE CABALA.
AND WE ALL BELIEVE FIRMLY IN THE POWER OF

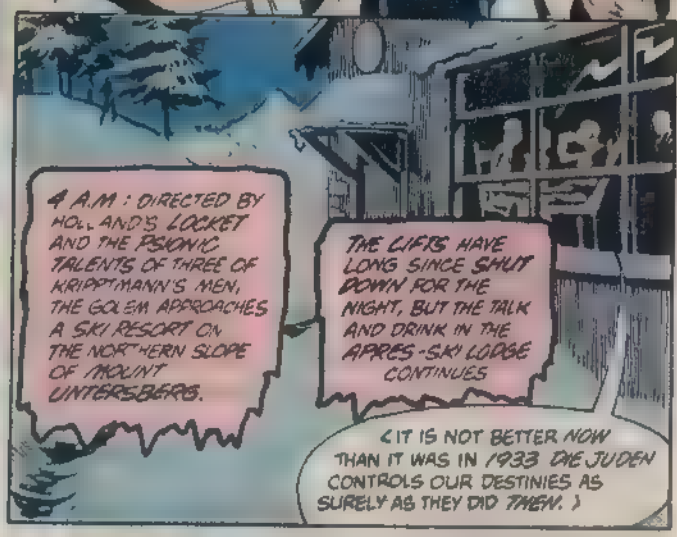

...THE GOLEM!
YES, ..GOLEM: THE "NOT-UNFORMED THING"... A BODY WITHOUT A SOUL...
...A POWERFUL, POTENTIALLY DESTRUCTIVE CREATURE. FORMED OF COMMON CLAY...
AND MADE "LIVING" BY AN ANCIENT ARCANE RITUAL NOW ENACTED BEFORE A SCARCELY BELIEVING HOLLAND'S EYES
AS WE LEARN FROM THE SEFER YEZIRAH, THAT SACRED BOOK WHICH IMPARTS THE MYSTERIES OF THE COSMOS
...THE GOLEM MUST BE INSCRIBED SO -- WITH THE HEBREW WORD EMET, MEANING LIFE, OR GOD OR THE INFINITE
WHEN WE WISH TO RETURN THE CREATURE TO LIFELESSNESS.
..THE FIRST CHARACTER-- THE ALEPH -- IS ERASED, TURNING THE WORD INTO MET, THE HEBREW WORD FOR "DEAD."
SUCH RITUAL IS NOT STRICTLY NECESSARY TO ACCOMPLISH OUR PURPOSES, BUT WE FEEL MORE COMFORTABLE WITH IT.
WHILE IT NO LONGER SERVES A PRACTICAL PURPOSE.
"..WE TAKE PLEASURE IN THE AGE-OLD TRADITIONS."
BUT PLEASURE IS HARDLY WHAT ALEC HOLLAND FEELS TIGHTENING THE LEATHERY SKIN AT HIS NAPE.
.. AS HE WATCHES THE CLAY HOMUNCULUS TAKE ITS FIRST BREATH OF SOME OBSCENE PARODY OF LIFE...
.. AND BEGIN TO CARRY OUT THE INSTRUCTIONS OF ITS MASTERS:
IT IS 2 A.M IN MUNICH.
THE LAMPS BURN LATE IN THE GIANT OLD HOTEL WHERE LIZ TREMAYNE AND DENNIS BARCLAY REMAIN
I DON'T CARE IF I DO HAVE TO FIND A ROOM OF MY OWN, DENNIS...
I AM NOT SHARING THIS ROOM WITH YOU ALL NIGHT--
12

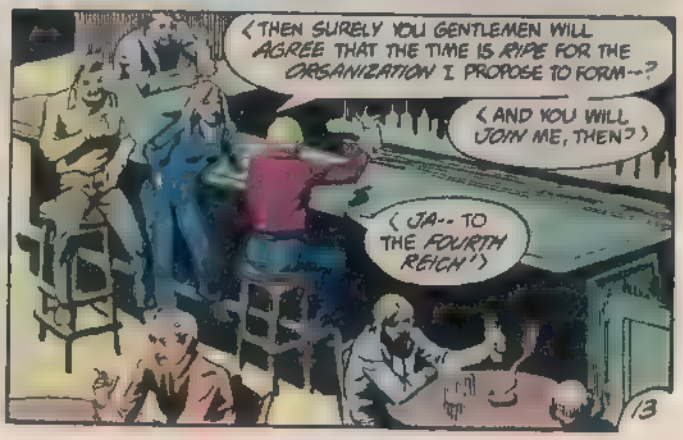

--AND CERTAINLY NOT AFTER WHAT YOU'VE TURNED IT INTO.
I MEAN, C'MON-- IT SMELLS LIKE A PHARMACEUTICAL HOUSE IN HERE!
I PROMISED ALEC I'D DO EVERYTHING I COULD TO FIND A CURE FOR HIM #--
THE SWAMP THING IS SLOWLY DYING OF SOME AS-YET-UNKNOWN AILMENT -- LEN.

--AND IT'S ABOUT TIME I LIVED UP TO THAT
SO? ANY LUCK, "DR SALK"?
I THINK SO ALEC LET ME TAKE A TISSUE-SAMPLE BEFORE HE AND THE OTHERS LEFT FOR BERCHTESGADEN
.AND AFTER THE TESTS I'VE RUN.


...THERE'S NO QUESTION THAT WHAT'S CAUSING THE DETERIORATION OF ALEC'S TISSUES IS DEFINITELY SOME KIND OF BACTERIAL INFECTION.
BUT IT'S NOTHING THAT OCCURS NATURALLY. IT SEEMS LIKE SOME MUTANT STRAIN OF E. COLI-- SOMETHING BRED ARTIFICIALLY, IN A LABORATORY.

IT HAD TO HAVE BEEN INTRODUCED INTO HIS BODY DELIBERATELY
THEN KRIPPTMANN WAS RIGHT #--
-- SOMEONE SOMEWHERE.. HAS BEEN TRYING TO KILL ALEC AFTER ALL!
LAST ISSUE -- LEN


4 A.M.: DIRECTED BY HOLLAND'S LOCKET AND THE PSIONIC TALENTS OF THREE OF KRIPPTMANN'S MEN, THE GOLEM APPROACHES A SKI RESORT ON THE NORTHERN SLOPE OF MOUNT UNTERSBERG.
THE LIFTS HAVE LONG SINCE SHUT DOWN FOR THE NIGHT, BUT THE TALK AND DRINK IN THE APRES-SKI LODGE CONTINUES
<IT IS NOT BETTER NOW THAN IT WAS IN 1933 DIE JUDEN CONTROLS OUR DESTINIES AS SURELY AS THEY DID THEN.>


<THEN SURELY YOU GENTLEMEN WILL AGREE THAT THE TIME IS RIPE FOR THE ORGANIZATION I PROPOSE TO FORM--?
<AND YOU WILL JOIN ME, THEN?>
<JA-- TO THE FOURTH REICH!>

IT HAPPENS WITHOUT WARNING
KARASSH
HIMMEL! VAS IST..?
TO THE MIND OF A BIOCHEMIST SUCH AS YOURSELF, DR HOLLAND, WHAT WE "CABALISTS" DO NO DOUBT SMACKS OF MYSTICISM AND MUMBO-JUMBO.
BUT I ASSURE YOU... THERE IS LESS OF MAGIC THAN OF SCIENCE ABOUT OUR PRACTICES.
"EVERYTHING THAT AT FIRST MAY SEEM THE STUFF OF LEGEND AND HORROR-STORIES--
"--WHAT OTHERS CALL DEMONS AND SPIRITS... PARA-NORMAL POWERS... MA ASIT, WHICH IS WHAT THE ANCIENT CABALISTS CALLED THE PRACTICAL APPLICATION OF 'MAGIC'..
"... EVEN THE SECRETS OF WHAT AWAITS US AFTER DEATH--"
--ALL CAN BE EXPLAINED IN SCIENTIFIC TERMS
YOU SEE WE "CABALISTS" KNOW AS FACT THINGS THAT ARE REJECTED OUTRIGHT BY MORE CONSERVATIVE... LESS OPEN... SCIENTIFIC MINDS--
--EH?
AWEEEEEEE
IT'S KAREN...! SHE'S HERE I CAN... SENSE IT!
AND SO COULD... THE GOLEM...!
THIS... IS IT, I GUESS... THE MOMENT OF TRUTH.
WHO DIES..? KAREN OR... US...?!
UNFORTUNATELY, NOTHING IS THAT SIMPLE OR THAT NEAT.
BEFORE A DEATH, THERE MUST ALWAYS BE SUFFERING.
A GOLEM THE ANCIENT AVENGER OF THE JEWS. HOW... PROVINCIAL.
BACK TO THE RIVERBED SCUM THAT SPAWNED YOU, MONSTER!
14

AND HOLLAND HERE, TOO-- YET AGAIN? SO RELENTLESS IN YOUR PURSUIT OF VENGEANCE.
THEN IT DEVOLVES UPON ME TO DISPATCH TWO CREATURES OF SLIME THIS EVE
VERY WELL.. BURN, HOLLAND!
HE HAS FELT HER FIRE BEFORE IT HAD LEFT HIM PARCHED, DESSICATED-- HIS OLIVE BURLAP FLESH LIKE RICE-PAPER, TAUT AND DESERT-DRY OVER THE LATTICEWORK OF HIS ROOTLIKE BONES
IT IS NOT A SENSATION HE CARES TO EXPERIENCE AGAIN
BURN!
WHAM
BUT WHAT HOLLAND MAY WANT IS NOT AN ISSUE HERE NOT TO THE GIRL.
SKREEE
GOOD LORD-- LOOK! SHE MUST HAVE DESTROYED THE GOLEM!
MILTON! ALAN! GO INSIDE AND SEE-- QUICKLY!--
"--AND SALVAGE THE CREATURE IF YOU CAN-- BEFORE IT IS TOO LATE! USE YOUR POWERS--DO WHATEVER YOU MUST-- JUST HURRY!"
WHILE OUTSIDE, A DRAMA OF RETRIBUTION AND VINDICATION.
...MOVES INEXORABLY TO A CLIMAX:
YOU MURDERER... I SAVED YOUR LIFE..
..AND THAT MAKES ME...RESPONSIBLE FOR THE ATROCITIES YOU'VE COMMITTED...
BUT I SWEAR.. BEFORE GOD... YOU WON'T LIVE TO COMMIT MORE--
AAAAGGH
15

HE FEELS IT AGAIN! THE FLAME, TEARING AWAY HIS HIDE! THE WAY HIS BELLOW IS TORN FROM HIS THROAT! HIS ARM IS REDUCED AT ONCE TO A SNARLED AND BLACKENED BRANCH.
NOW HIS BREATH LEAVES HIM IN GASPS AS RAGGED AS THE TATTERS THAT USED TO BE HIS ARM! HOW CAN SOMETHING THAT PAINFUL HAPPEN SO QUICKLY?
THUS HIS MIND, ALREADY PUSHED TO THE PRECIPICE OF INSANITY, REJECTS WHAT HAPPENS NEXT!
AN ONSLAUGHT OF PSYCHOKINETIC FORCE LIFTING AND HURLING HIM HEADLONG INTO SOMETHING SIMILAR TO THE BLACKNESS OF OBLIVION!
ONLY THIS OBLIVION IS WHITE!
AND VERY COLD.
AND, PERHAPS, IN ITS OWN WAY, MERCIFUL, IT SPARES HOLLAND THE SIGHT OF YET ANOTHER PYROTECHNIC HORROR!
BADOOM!
MERCIES WITHIN MERCIES
THE GIRL DID NOT SEE THE MEN ESCAPE THE MICROBUS SCANT SECONDS BEFORE IT WAS IMMOLATED UTTERLY!
NOW--NOT EVEN SHE CAN STAND ALONE AGAINST BOTH THE GOLEM AND YOUR POWER!
ATTACK HER--WITH WHATEVER POWER YOU CAN MUSTER! NOW!
NO--WAIT! SHE'S ESCAPING!
ACT NOW AND YOU'LL DESTROY THE GOLEM!

HOLLAND AWAKENS FROM HIS TEMPORARY OBLIVION BRIEF MINUTES LATER, TO DISCOVER THAT THE DRAMA MAY HAVE REACHED A CLIMAX..
.. BUT THERE IS YET ANOTHER ACT-- AT LEAST-- TO BE PLAYED OUT:
NO SIGN... OF KAREN...?! AGAIN... SHE'S ESCAPED...?!
THE ACT BEGINS WITH TERRIFYING SUDDENNESS AND A DEFIANCE OF COMPREHENSION--
--NOT UNLIKE EVERYTHING ELSE THAT HAS TRANSPIRED ON THIS FRIGID, GODFORSAKEN HILL.
WHAT... IN THE NAME... OF GOD...?!
THE EARTHEN JUGGERNAUT ATTACKS ONCE MORE--THIS TIME, WITH THE SWAMP THING ITS CHOSEN VICTIM.
KRIPPTMANN AND HIS AIDES ARE NO MORE COMPREHENDING BUT THE CABAL LEADER'S MIND RACES WITH AN ALACRITY THAT BELIES HIS AGE.
HOLLAND! THE LOCKET-- REMOVE THE LOCKET!
PERHAPS THAT WILL STOP IT!
YES. THE LOCKET...! THIS THING IS.. "PROGRAMMED" TO.. KILL KAREN..
.. AND THOUGH IT... HASN'T ANY MIND.. IT OPERATES ON A KIND OF INSTINCT IMPARTED TO IT... BUT ITS CREATORS...!
IT PROBABLY SENSES KAREN THROUGH THE LOCKET.. THE WAY I DO...
SO IF I .. GET RID OF THE LOCKET... THE GOLEM WILL BREAK OFF THE ATTACK. ..!
BUT BY NOW, THE BITTER TRUTH IS FAMILIAR TO HIM
NOTHING IS THAT SIMPLE.
THE LOCKET...! I. I. CAN'T REMOVE IT. !
GOOD LORD.. ! THE ROOTS OF MY BODY THEY'VE GROWN OVER IT.. ! THE THING'S BECOME... A PART OF ME...!

REVEALED NEXT ISSUE HARRY KAY'S SECRET PAST... DENNIS BARCLAY'S SHOCKING DIAGNOSIS... THE CABAL'S HORRIFYING SCIENTIFIC SECRETS-- AND THE BEING OF WHOM IT IS WRITTEN:

BY HIS NUMBER SHALL YOU KNOW HIM... AND HIS NUMBER IS 666

The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
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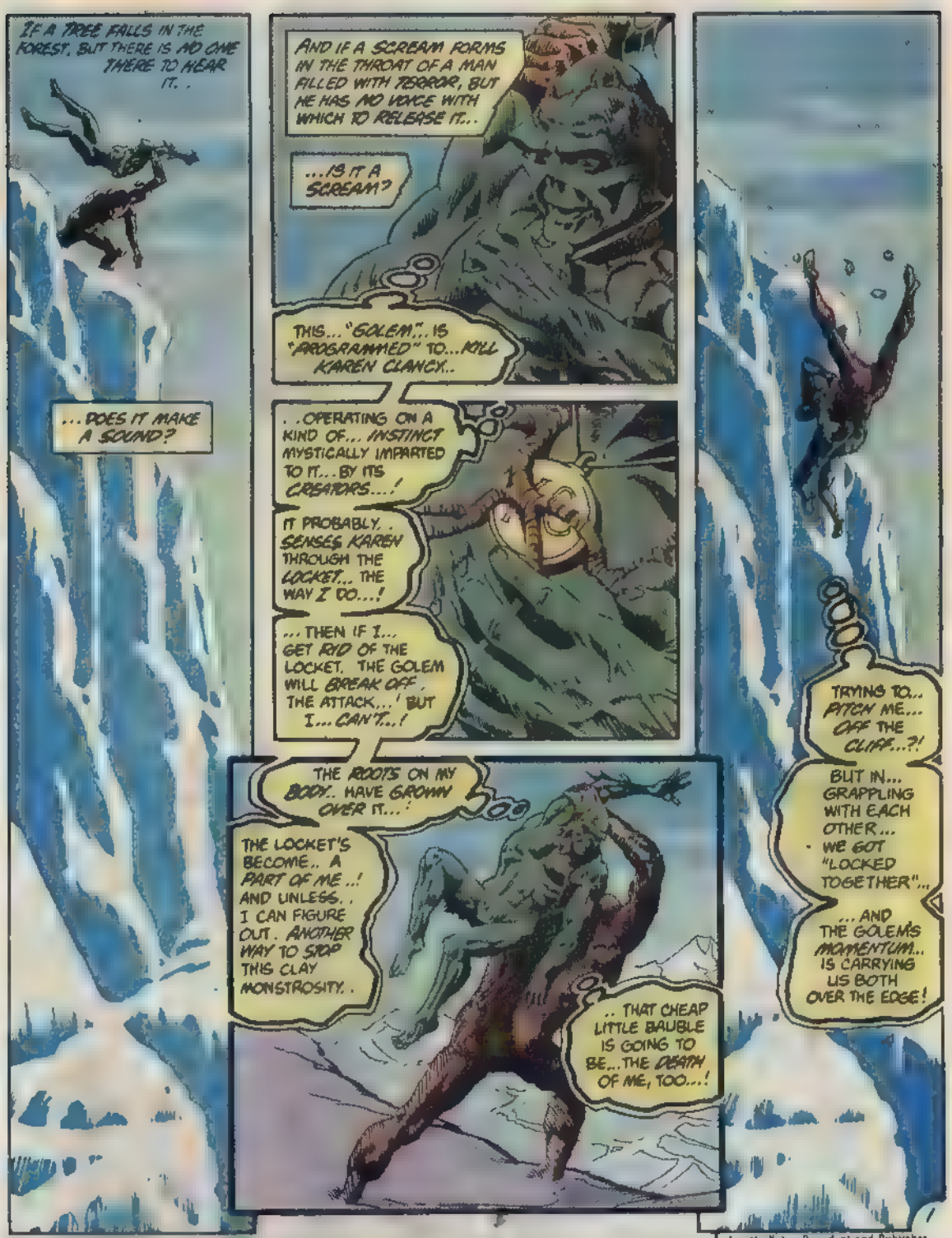
IF A TREE FALLS IN THE FOREST, BUT THERE IS NO ONE THERE TO HEAR IT. .
...DOES IT MAKE A SOUND?
AND IF A SCREAM FORMS IN THE THROAT OF A MAN FILLED WITH TERROR, BUT HE HAS NO VOICE WITH WHICH TO RELEASE IT...
...IS IT A SCREAM?
THIS..."GOLEM"..IS "PROGRAMMED" TO...KILL KAREN CLANCY..
..OPERATING ON A KIND OF... INSTINCT MYSTICALLY IMPARTED TO IT...BY ITS CREATORS...!
IT PROBABLY. . SENSES KAREN THROUGH THE LOCKET... THE WAY I DO...!
...THEN IF I... GET RID OF THE LOCKET, THE GOLEM WILL BREAK OFF THE ATTACK...! BUT I...CAN'T...!
THE ROOTS ON MY BODY. HAVE GROWN OVER IT...!
THE LOCKET'S BECOME.. A PART OF ME ..! AND UNLESS. . I CAN FIGURE OUT. ANOTHER WAY TO STOP THIS CLAY MONSTROSITY. .
.. THAT CHEAP LITTLE BAUBLE IS GOING TO BE...THE DEATH OF ME, TOO...!
TRYING TO... PITCH ME... OFF THE CLIFF...?!
BUT IN... GRAPPLING WITH EACH OTHER... WE GOT "LOCKED TOGETHER"...
...AND THE GOLEM'S MOMENTUM... IS CARRYING US BOTH OVER THE EDGE!

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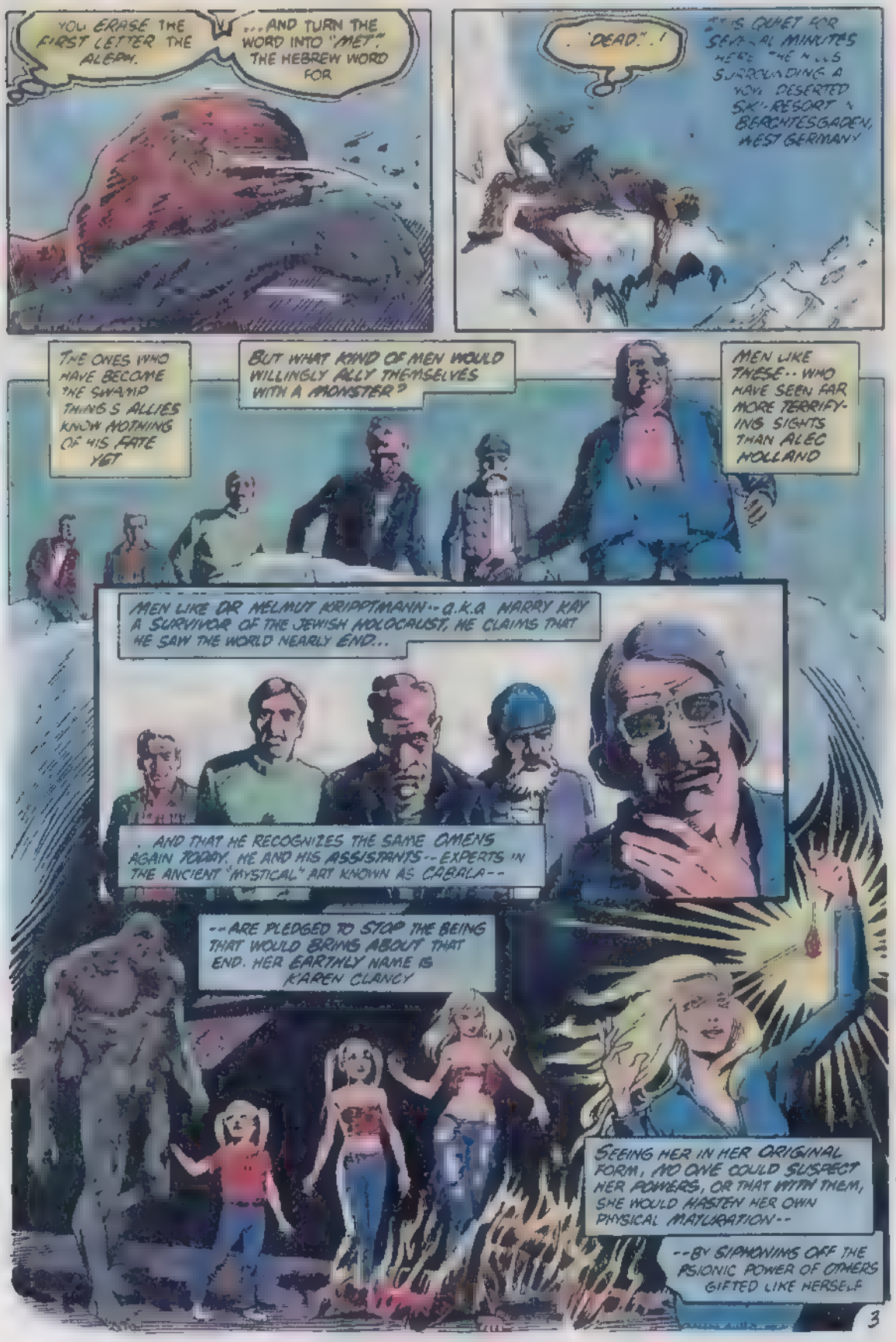
THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND HAS NO VOICE
HIS MISSHAPEN LARYNX CAN GIVE FORTH ONLY A GROTESQUE RASP LIKE THE BELLOWS OF AN OLD-FASHIONED IRON LUNG
NOW TERROR RISES IN THAT MALFORMED THROAT BUT WHILE ALEC HOLLAND CANNOT VOICE IT..
... HE IS SCREAMING INSIDE.
AND YET IT LIVES
A MARTIN PASKO (WRITER) TOM YEATES (ARTIST) LEN WEIN EDITOR. PRESENTATION
RENDERED BY TATJANA WOOD (COLORIST) JOHN COSTANZA (LETTERER)
IF THE FALL DOESN'T KILL ME...
..THIS THING WILL ESPECIALLY IF IT.. UNNH FALLS ON TOP OF ME
IT'S HOPELESS THERE'S NO WAY TO STOP THIS MONSTROSITY
WAIT...! WHAT WAS IT.. THE MEN WHO BUILT TH'S THING... SAID..
THAT INSCRIPTION. ON THE GOLEM'S "FOREHEAD"... IS "EMET" ONE OF THE HEBREW WORDS MEANING "LIFE"..
CARVING IT THERE "ACTIVATES" THE GOLEM AND WHEN YOU WANT TO "TURN IT OFF".
SWAMP THING
J BOG


YOU ERASE THE FIRST LETTER THE ALEPH.
...AND TURN THE WORD INTO "MET." THE HEBREW WORD FOR
"DEAD."!
IT IS QUIET FOR SEVERAL MINUTES HERE THE WOODS SURROUNDING A NOW DESERTED SKI-RESORT IN BERCHTESGADEN, WEST GERMANY
THE ONES WHO HAVE BECOME THE SWAMP THING'S ALLIES KNOW NOTHING OF HIS FATE YET
BUT WHAT KIND OF MEN WOULD WILLINGLY ALLY THEMSELVES WITH A MONSTER?
MEN LIKE THESE.. WHO HAVE SEEN FAR MORE TERRIFYING SIGHTS THAN ALEC HOLLAND
MEN LIKE DR MELMUT KRIPPTMANN -- A.K.A HARRY KAY A SURVIVOR OF THE JEWISH HOLOCAUST, HE CLAIMS THAT HE SAW THE WORLD NEARLY END...
. AND THAT HE RECOGNIZES THE SAME OMENS AGAIN TODAY. HE AND HIS ASSISTANTS -- EXPERTS IN THE ANCIENT "MYSTICAL" ART KNOWN AS CABALA --
--ARE PLEDGED TO STOP THE BEING THAT WOULD BRING ABOUT THAT END. HER EARTHLY NAME IS KAREN CLANCY
SEEING HER IN HER ORIGINAL FORM, NO ONE COULD SUSPECT HER POWERS, OR THAT WITH THEM, SHE WOULD HASTEN HER OWN PHYSICAL MATURATION --
--BY SIPHONING OFF THE PSIONIC POWER OF OTHERS GIFTED LIKE HERSELF

NO ONE COULD SUSPECT SHE IS AN ENTITY KNOWN AS A HERALD OF THE ANTICHRIST --ONE OF WHICH APPEARS ON THE MORTAL PLANE ONCE EVERY THREE OR FOUR GENERATIONS--
--TO LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE CONFLICT PIOUS MEN CALL ARMAGEDDON
NO ONE EXCEPT HELMUT KRIPPTMANN AND HIS FOLLOWERS.
HAVING SEEN THINGS THAT WOULD DRIVE LESSER MEN TO MADNESS, THEY ARE PREPARED TO ACCEPT ANYTHING--AND SO THEY ARE PREPARED TO SEE ALEC HOLLAND SURVIVE HIS FALL:
IT'S... OVER...! YOUR GOLEM. IS... "DEAD"!
BUT BEFORE ANOTHER MOMENT PASSES, IT IS UPON THEM--A WAVE OF ALIEN CONSCIOUSNESS WASHING AWAY ALL THOUGHTS SAVE ITS OWN.
A TELEPATHIC CHALLENGE:
OUR MOST RECENT ENCOUNTER * REVEALED YOUR... "CABAL" TO BE A FORMIDABLE ENEMY, GENTLEMEN. MY COMPLIMENTS.
ARRRGHHHH
*LAST ISSUE.--LEN
AND THEN, EACH OF THEM SEES HER, IN HIS MIND:
WHAT MAKES YOU FORMIDABLE IS YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF WHAT I AM... AND WHAT I REPRESENT.
FOR I HAVE SLAIN ALL OTHERS WHO MIGHT RECOGNIZE WHAT MY WORK HERE PORTENDS.
AND THEN, AS SUDDENLY AS IT CAME, THE VOICE INSIDE THEIR HEADS FADES.. ALONG WITH THE PAIN IT BROUGHT.
JA, WITCH-CHILD, I KNOW THAT PLACE I WORSHIPPED THERE IN MY YOUTH YOU HAVE CHOSEN IT TO TAUNT ME.
BUT YOU WILL NOT DEFILE IT--EVEN IF IT MEANS OUR LIVES!
YOU ARE THE LAST. BEHOLD THE IMAGE MY MIND IMPARTS TO YOURS. DO YOU KNOW THIS PLACE? DARE YOU CONFRONT ME AGAIN--THERE?
I WOULD WELCOME IT. FOR I SHALL NOT TRULY KNOW FULFILLMENT AS LONG AS YOU YET LIVE.
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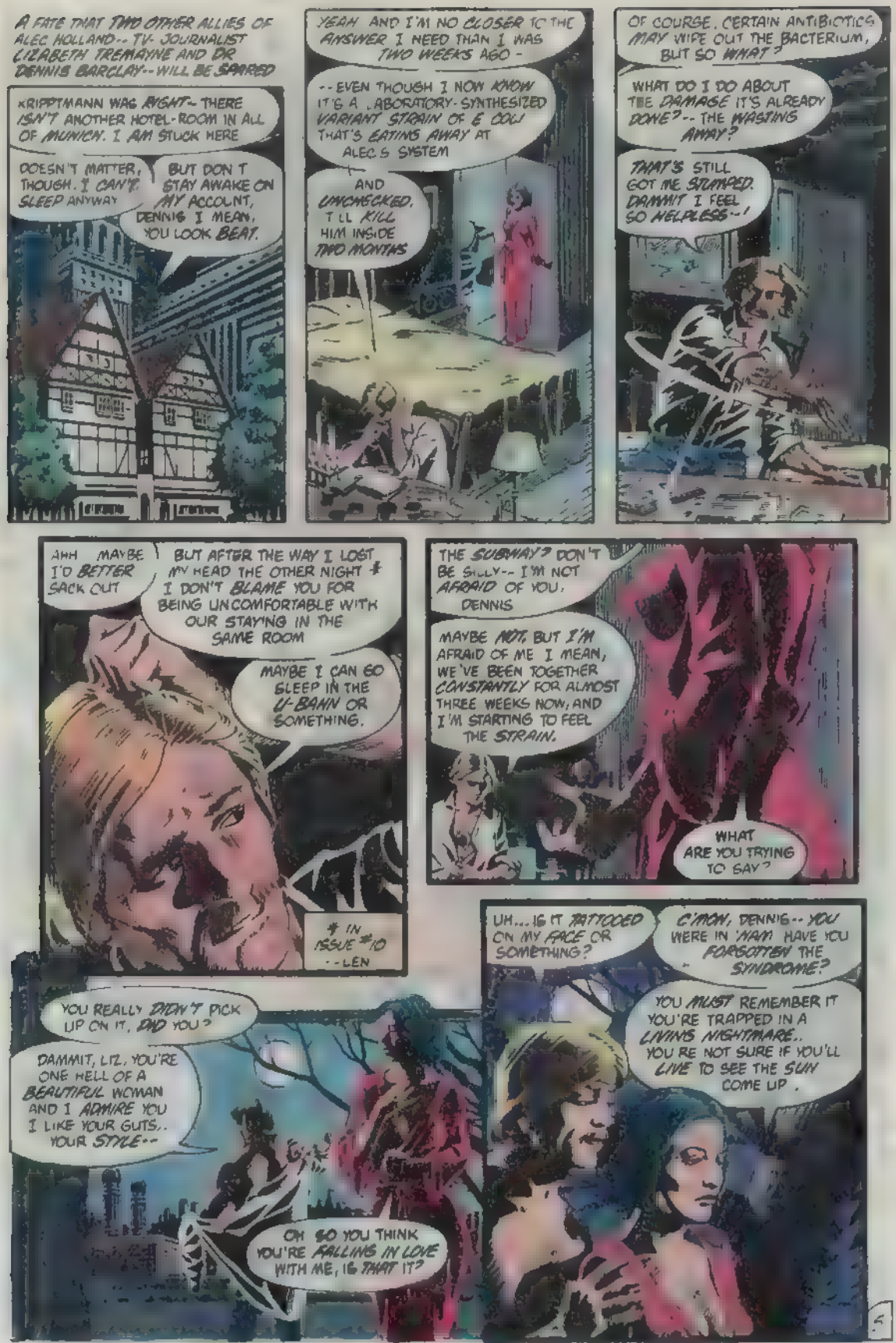

A FATE THAT TWO OTHER ALLIES OF ALEC HOLLAND -- TV- JOURNALIST LIZABETH TREMAYNE AND DR DENNIS BARCLAY -- WILL BE SHARED
KRIPPTMANN WAS RIGHT -- THERE ISN'T ANOTHER HOTEL-ROOM IN ALL OF MUNICH. I AM STUCK HERE
DOESN'T MATTER, THOUGH. I CAN'T SLEEP ANYWAY
BUT DON T STAY AWAKE ON MY ACCOUNT, DENNIS I MEAN, YOU LOOK BEAT.
YEAH AND I'M NO CLOSER TO THE ANSWER I NEED THAN I WAS TWO WEEKS AGO -
-- EVEN THOUSH I NOW KNOW IT'S A LABORATORY- SYNTHESIZED VARIANT STRAIN OF E COLI THAT'S EATING AWAY AT ALEC S SYSTEM
AND UNCHECKED, T LL KILL HIM INSIDE TWO MONTHS
OF COURSE. CERTAIN ANTIBIOTICS MAY WIPE OUT THE BACTERIUM, BUT SO WHAT?
WHAT DO I DO ABOUT THE DAMAGE IT'S ALREADY DONE? -- THE WASTING AWAY?
THAT'S STILL GOT ME STUMPED. DAMMIT I FEEL SO HELPLESS --!
AHH MAYBE I'D BETTER SACK OUT
BUT AFTER THE WAY I LOST MY HEAD THE OTHER NIGHT + I DON'T BLAME YOU FOR BEING UNCOMFORTABLE WITH OUR STAYING IN THE SAME ROOM
MAYBE I CAN GO SLEEP IN THE U-BAHN OR SOMETHING.
+ IN ISSUE #10 -- LEN
THE SUBWAY? DON'T BE SILLY -- I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU, DENNIS
MAYBE NOT, BUT I'M AFRAID OF ME I MEAN, WE'VE BEEN TOGETHER CONSTANTLY FOR ALMOST THREE WEEKS NOW, AND I'M STARTING TO FEEL THE STRAIN.
WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO SAY?
UH... IS IT TATTOOED ON MY FACE OR SOMETHING?
C'MON, DENNIS -- YOU WERE IN 'NAM HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN THE SYNDROME?
YOU MUST REMEMBER IT YOU'RE TRAPPED IN A LIVING NIGHTMARE.. YOU RE NOT SURE IF YOU'LL LIVE TO SEE THE SUN COME UP .
YOU REALLY DIDN'T PICK UP ON IT, DID YOU?
DAMMIT, LIZ, YOU'RE ONE HELL OF A BEAUTIFUL WOMAN AND I ADMIRE YOU I LIKE YOUR GUTS.. YOUR STYLE --
OH SO YOU THINK YOU'RE FALLING IN LOVE WITH ME, IS THAT IT?
6

...SO YOU REACH OUT FOR WHOEVER'S THERE, RIGHT? THAT'S NOT LOVE, KIDDO -- THAT'S DESPERATION
GIVE YOURSELF CREDIT FOR HAVING MORE TO OFFER THAN A SAIGON BAR-GIRL, HUH?
DENNIS... LOOK, YOU'RE A NICE GUY AND EVERYTHING, AND I UNDERSTAND HOW YOU FEEL. BUT...BUT...
AW, HELL, I HAVEN'T BEEN WITH SOMEBODY IN A LONG TIME, EITHER.
BUT IF SOMETHING... DID HAPPEN BETWEEN US... I'D WANT IT TO BE BECAUSE IT WAS REALLY YOU I WANTED.
...NOT JUST ANYBODY WHO WAS. . "HANDY." YOU CAN UNDERSTAND THAT, CAN'T YOU?
SURE..
.. EXCEPT I'M NOT CONVINCED YOU REALLY KNOW WHAT YOU WANT
ALL I WANT IS A CHANCE TO "HELP" YOU SORT OUT YOUR FEELINGS--
UH... DENNIS?
MMMM?
GO SLEEP IN THE SUBWAY.
WHO IN THE WORLD COULD THIS BE AT THIS HOUR?
YES..?
I AM DER NIGHT CLERK, SO SORRY TO DISTURB YOU, FRAULEIN-- I VAS INVESTIGATING A COMPLAINT.
BUT DERE SEEMS TO BE A MISTAKE
AND YOU MADE IT, MISS TREMAYNE -- WHEN YOU OPENED THAT DOOR!
SHAME ON YOU-- A SOPHISTICATED WOMAN LIKE YOU NOT SPOTTING A PHONY GERMAN ACCENT WHEN YOU HEAR IT!
HEY! WHO THE HELL ARE YOU--?
DON'T EVEN TWITCH, BARCLAY-- OR YOUR NEXT PATIENT WILL BE LITTLE MISS TV-STAR HERE.
AS FOR ME... YOU CAN CALL ME WHAT THEY CALL ME AT THE SUNDERLAND CORP-- YOU DO REMEMBER SUNDERLAND, DON'T YOU? YOU TWO USED TO WORK FOR THEM.
ANYWAY, THEY CALL ME... GRASP

GRASP CODE-NAME OF ONE WALTER ELLENBECK, NOW IN THE EMPLOY OF THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION--SPECIFICALLY, IN THE EXCLUSIVE EMPLOY OF ITS TOP-SECRET "COVERT ACTIVITIES DIVISION"...
--PERSONALLY SUPERVISED BY COMPANY CHAIRMAN AVERY SUNDERLAND--GENERAL, U.S. ARMY (RET.)
TO HIT:
I HAVE A PROGRESS REPORT FROM OPERATIVE "GRASP" FOR YOU, GENERAL.
BRING IT RIGHT IN, MISS--AH--MS. HAMMOND.
HE ARRIVED SAFELY IN MUNICH, SIR. ONE OF OUR OPERATIVES IN THE BUREAU THERE HELPED HIM TRACE DR BARCLAY AND LIZABETH TREMAYNE.
HE INTENDS TO ELICIT THE EXACT WHEREABOUTS OF HOLLAND AND HARRY KAY FROM THEM.
GOOD
YOU KNOW, IT'S A SHAME KAY DECEIVED US
APPARENTLY, HE WAS PURSUING SOME... ACTIVITIES OF HIS OWN WHILE HE WAS SUPPOSED TO BE WORKING FOR US.
NOW HE'S BECOME A LIABILITY--JEOPARDIZING OUR CONTRACT ON HOLLAND. TOO BAD. HE DID GOOD WORK.
DID YOU SAY YOU WANTED THE "SWAMP THING" FILE, GENERAL...?
NO... JUST KEEP IT HANDY--FOR AN UPDATE, AND THE FILES ON KAY, BARCLAY AND TREMAYNE, TOO.
IT IS NEARING DAWN HALF A WORLD AWAY THERE, THE MONSTROUS SUBJECT OF THE GENERAL'S MUSINGS REMAINS OBLIVIOUS OF HIS THREATENED MURDER.
IF "GRASP" COMES THROUGH FOR US, THEY'LL ALL BE DEAD WITHIN 24 HOURS.
I HOPE THIS HASN'T BEEN PAINFUL, DR. HOLLAND BUT CUTTING YOUR ROOTS IS THE ONLY WAY WE CAN REMOVE THE LOCKET.
YOU SEE, MY FOLLOWERS AND I REALIZE THAT ALL OBJECTS TOUCHED BY HUMAN HANDS ARE IMBUED WITH A RESIDUE OF THEIR OWNERS' AURAS--
--THE ENERGY-FIELDS GENERATED BY ALL LIVING THINGS
ORDINARILY, THE ENERGY CAN BE SENSED ONLY BY SOMEONE PECULIARLY SENSITIVE TO IT--A PETER HURKOS, FOR EXAMPLE--BECAUSE IT IS SO FAINT.
BUT A MUTANT BEING LIKE THE CLANCY GIRL IMPARTS FAR STRONGER ENERGY--

--THUS, ANYONE ELSE WHO TOUCHES THIS LOCKET-- YOURSELF INCLUDED-- WOULD ESTABLISH PSIONIC CONTACT WITH THE ENERGY'S SOURCE
SO THAT'S HOW THE LOCKET ENABLED ME TO SENSE HER PRESENCE.. KNOW HER WHEREABOUTS.
WE'VE RETRIEVED THAT CLAY HORROR WE BUILT. NOW WHAT?
REPEATEDLY, SINCE ISSUE #6--LEN
WE MUST SEND THE GOLEM AGAINST KAREN CLANCY AGAIN.. BUT THIS TIME, WE MUST PREVENT IT FROM ALSO ATTACKING WHOEVER HOLDS THE LOCKET
SO. WE PUT THE BAUBLE ON THE GOLEM ITSELF.. AND GAIN THE ADVANTAGE OF THE LINK TO THE GIRL--
--ENSURING THAT THE GOLEM'S PATH TO HER WILL BE STRAIGHT AND TRUE.
DR. KRIPPTMANN I FOUND CAR KEYS ON ONE OF THE GOLEM'S VICTIMS.
IF THE GIRL REALLY IS HEADED FOR THE SYNAGOGUE SHE "SHOWED" US, WE'LL NEED A VEHICLE. AND I'D SAY WE'VE JUST... "FOUND" ONE
WHILE IN A CERTAIN GASTHAUS IN MUNICH
SO IT'S KRIPPTMANN --I MEAN, HARRY KAY.. YOU'RE REALLY, AFTER
WOULDN'T YOU LIKE TO KNOW? BUT I DON'T THINK YOU'RE IN A POSITION TO PUMP ME FOR INFORMATION -- EH, DOCTOR?
YOU SAID YOU'RE IN RADIO-COMMUNICATION WITH KAY SO WHERE IS HE?
WE DON'T KNOW. HE CHECKS IN WITH US PERIODICALLY
DENNIS'S EYES WAVER SLIGHTLY IT IS A SILENT CODE-- AN URGENT, UNSPOKEN COMMAND.
WHOSE MEANING LIZ INTUITS IMMEDIATELY SHE GETS UP WITH A BARELY-PERCEPTIBLE NOD.
HE SAID HE'D CALL US--
--WHEN HIS "JOB" WAS FINISHED-- TO LET US KNOW HE WAS COMING BACK
SUPPOSE I DON'T BELIEVE YOU, BARCLAY
8

SUPPOSE YOU JUST SIT DOWN THERE AT THAT RADIO--?
YOU'RE A FOOL, BARCLAY!
OH, YEAH?--
ZLHT
--THAT CLUB HAS A LOT OF MEMBERS, KIDDO
UNNH
GEE, DENNIS, FOR TWO PEOPLE WHO DON'T KNOW WHAT THEY'RE DOING
..WE CLOBBERED HIM LIKE PROS, DIDN'T WE?
C'MON-- STOP CONGRATULATING YOURSELF AND GIVE ME A HAND PACKING WE'VE GOTTA CATCH UP TO KRIPPTMANN AND ALEC.
I'VE GOT A REAL STRONG FEELING THAT OUR MR GRASP" IS THE REAL "PRO" HERE-- AS IN PROFESSIONAL KILLER.
THEY HAD LED TO GRASP THEY DO INDEED KNOW THE RADIO-FREQUENCY ON WHICH KRIPPTMANN CAN BE CONTACTED-- AND WITHIN MINUTES
NO, DENNIS, I URGE YOU-- DO NOT COME HERE! OVER.
YOU CAN'T CHANGE OUR MINDS, KRIPPTMANN--
--WE'VE GONE THIS FAR WITH YOU-- WE MIGHT AS WELL PLAY IT OUT.
BESIDES, WE CAN'T STAY HERE-- IT'S TOO "HOT" FOR US NOW
ALL RIGHT, YOU HAVE OUR LOCATION. BUT LET IT BE ON YOUR HEAD. KAY. OUT.

KARL...ALAN...MILTON... DO YOU REALIZE THAT THE GOLEM IS MERELY OUR INSTRUMENT--
--AN IMPERFECT ONE, AT THAT--AND THAT IT CANNOT DO ITS JOB ALONE.?
YOU MUST USE YOUR POWERS TO THE FULLEST THIS TIME DO I MAKE MYSELF CLEAR?
WE GAVE YOU OUR PLEDGE, DOCTOR, THAT IF WE MUST SACRIFICE OURSELVES... SO BE IT.
KRIPPTMANN, I UNDERSTAND WHAT'S AT STAKE HERE...
...BUT WHY SHOULD KILLING THE GIRL BE SOME KIND OF.. PERSONAL VENDETTA FOR YOU?
AS A PHYSICIAN, I WAS VALUABLE TO THE COMMANDANT AT DACHAU--AND WAS SPARED IMMEDIATE EXECUTION.
I DELUDED MYSELF· PERHAPS IF I CO-OPERATED WITH THE NAZI SS I COULD HELP MY FELLOW JEWS--· SUBVERSIVELY FROM "WITHIN"
SO I CHOSE TO TREAT THE PRISONERS' SCURVY AND MALNUTRITION, WHILE I ATE MEAT.
"I CHOSE TO CRY FOR THE HUNDREDS GASSED EACH DAY-- AND BY NIGHT, DISSECTED THEIR CORPSES FOR MY SUPERIORS' GENETIC EXPERIMENTS.
"AND WHEN THE DEAD CRIED OUT TO ME ACCUSINGLY IN MY SLEEP, AND THERE CAME NO RESPITE FROM THE GUILT THAT HAD BECOME MY LIFE...
..."I PRAYED FOR A DEATH THAT DID NOT COME
"AND, LORD HELP ME, I WAS--IN MY OWN SMALL WAY--AN ACCESSORY TO HIS MONSTROUS CRIME."
"SIX MILLION DIED BECAUSE THE LAST INCARNATION OF THE 'GREAT BEAST'--ADOLF HITLER-- ALMOST TRIUMPHED.

"PERHAPS I SURVIVED BECAUSE I AM DESTINED TO MAKE ANOTHER CHOICE TODAY, THE HORROR IS REBORN WITH A NEW FACE.

I CAN DO NOTHING AND AGAIN BECOME ACCOMPLICE TO THAT HORROR."

NOW--WHILE SHE IS DISTRACTED--

OR I CAN ATONE--BY DEFEATING IT

--STRIKE!

KRIPPTMANN'S STRATEGY SUCCEEDS, PERHAPS BEYOND HIS EXPECTATIONS.

BUT FOR ALEC HOLLAND, THERE IS NO ELATION.

EVEN THOUGH HE KNOWS WHAT THE GIRL TRULY IS, EVEN THOUGH HE KNOWS SHE MUST DIE...

NO...!

...HE CANNOT LET GO.

OR CAN HE?

HE STOPS.

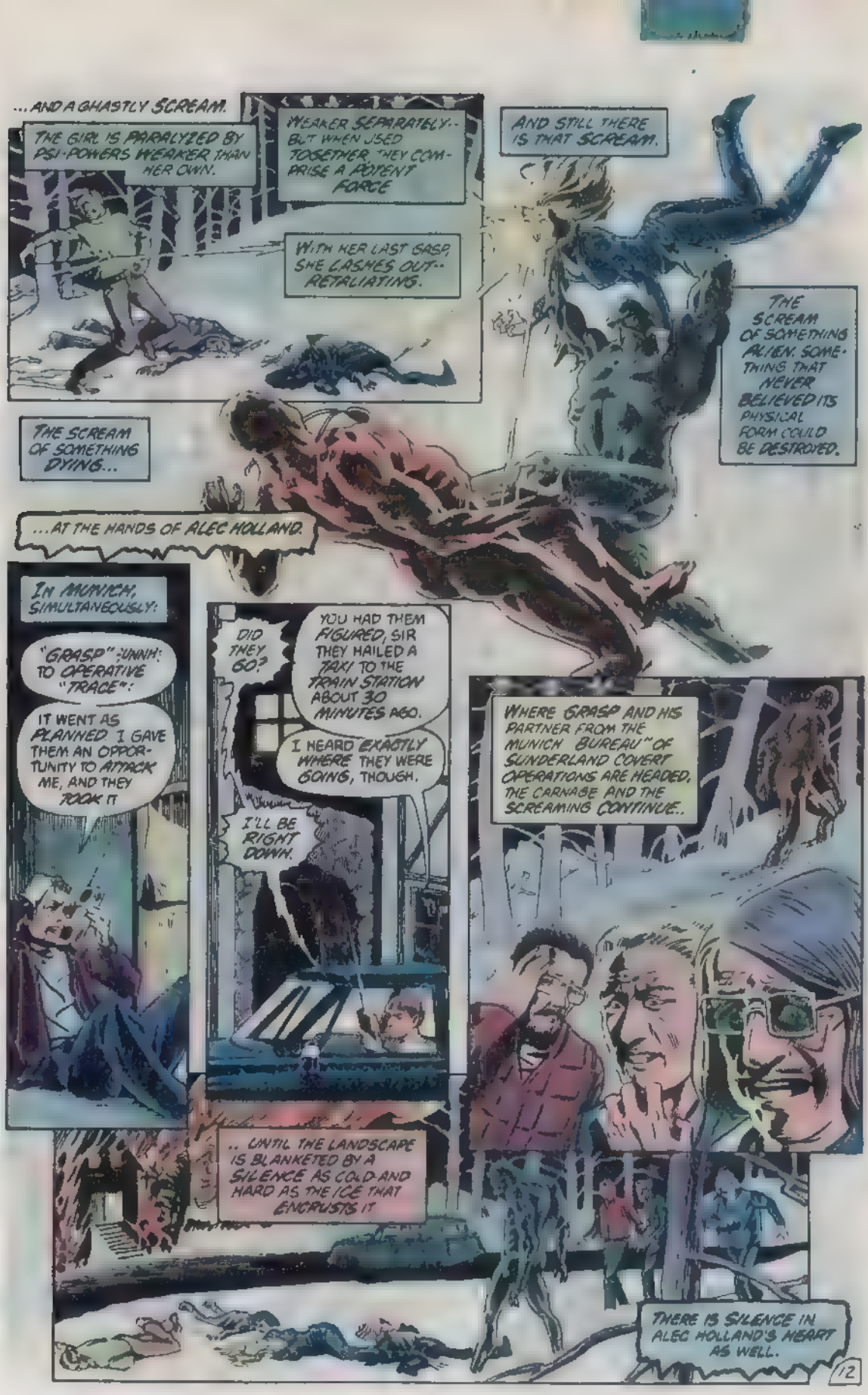
"...AND SHE'D BE...DEAD RIGHT NOW...IF YOU HADN'T INTERVENED...! YOU HAVE A RESPONSIBILITY...TO SEE THIS THROUGH.. TO THE END NOW..."

AND SO HE DOES.

NO...! LET... THAT THING. KILL HER, HOLLAND..!

YOU WANTED TO, YOURSELF..ONLY A FEW HOURS AGO ! HER FATHER WAS RIGHT ABOUT HER . WHEN HE TRIED TO KILL HER..!

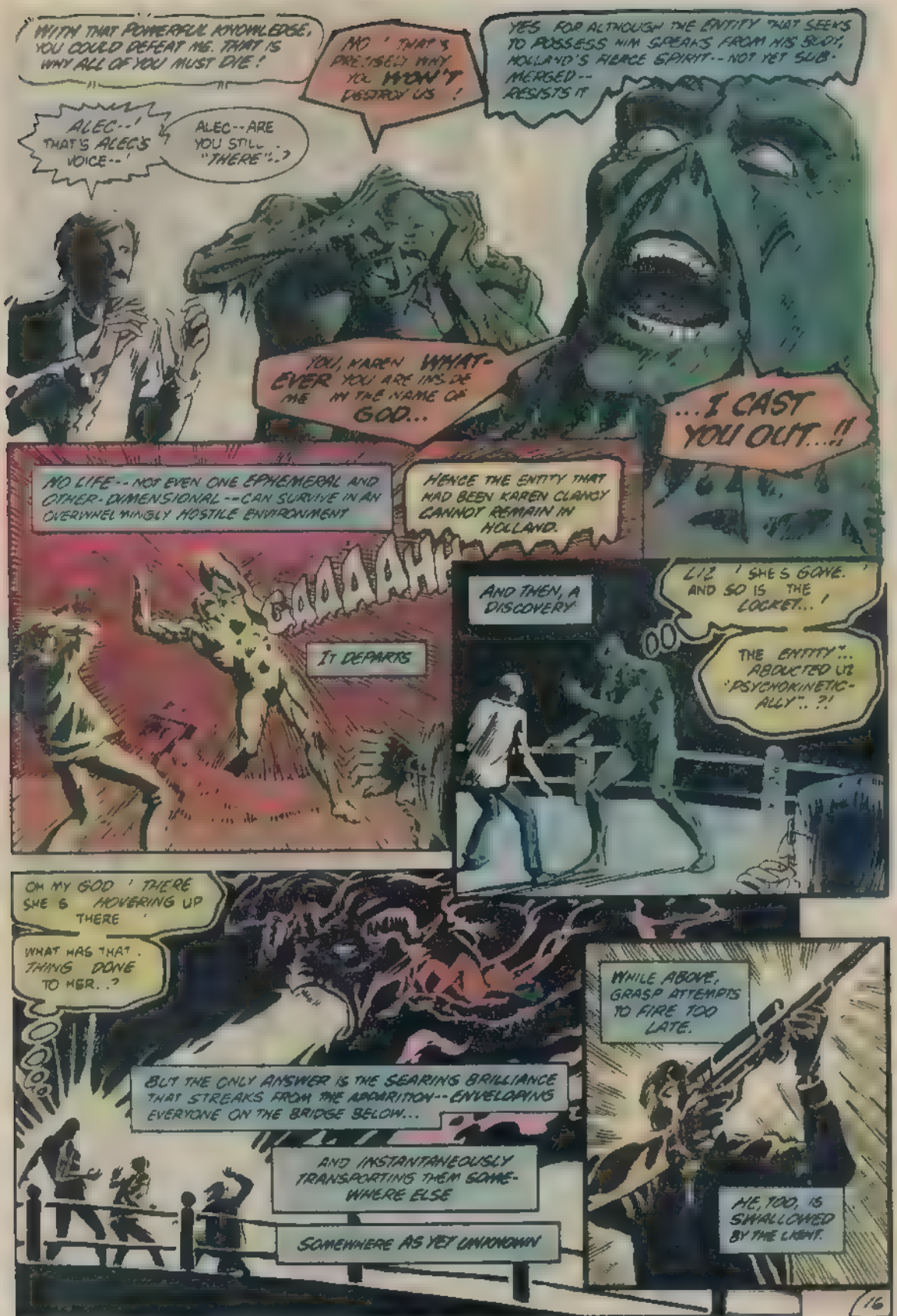
HE DOES NOT RESIST--DOES NOT EVEN RECOIL--AS, ABOVE THE CRACKLE OF LICKING FLAME, THERE IS THE SOUND OF CURSES IN A LANGUAGE UNKNOWN ON EARTH. THEN THE SOUND OF BONES SNAPPING...

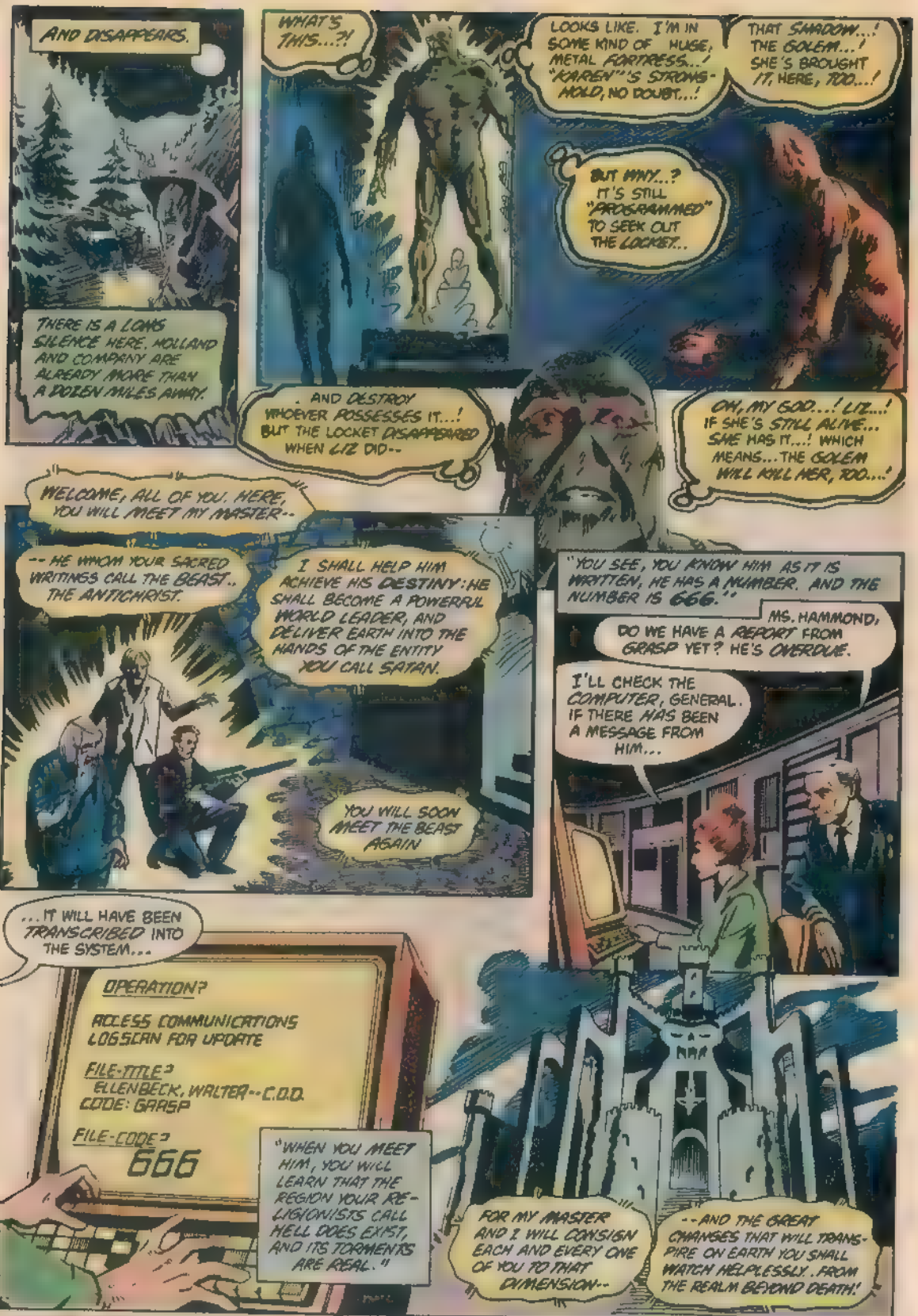

...AND A GHASTLY SCREAM.
THE GIRL IS PARALYZED BY PSI-POWERS WEAKER THAN HER OWN.
WEAKER SEPARATELY-- BUT WHEN USED TOGETHER, THEY COMPRISE A POTENT FORCE
WITH HER LAST GASP, SHE LASHES OUT-- RETALIATING.
AND STILL THERE IS THAT SCREAM.
THE SCREAM OF SOMETHING ALIEN. SOMETHING THAT NEVER BELIEVED ITS PHYSICAL FORM COULD BE DESTROYED.
THE SCREAM OF SOMETHING DYING...
...AT THE HANDS OF ALEC HOLLAND.
IN MUNICH, SIMULTANEOUSLY:
"GRASP" :UNNH: TO OPERATIVE "TRACE":
IT WENT AS PLANNED. I GAVE THEM AN OPPORTUNITY TO ATTACK ME, AND THEY TOOK IT
DID THEY GO?
YOU HAD THEM FIGURED, SIR. THEY HAILED A TAXI TO THE TRAIN STATION ABOUT 30 MINUTES AGO.
I HEARD EXACTLY WHERE THEY WERE GOING, THOUGH.
I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN.
WHERE GRASP AND HIS PARTNER FROM THE MUNICH "BUREAU" OF SUNDERLAND COVERT OPERATIONS ARE HEADED, THE CARNAGE AND THE SCREAMING CONTINUE..
.. UNTIL THE LANDSCAPE IS BLANKETED BY A SILENCE AS COLD AND HARD AS THE ICE THAT ENCRUSTS IT
THERE IS SILENCE IN ALEC HOLLAND'S HEART AS WELL.

THERE ARE NO EMOTIONS LEFT.
KRIPPTMANN'S MEN.. WEAKENED HER DEFENSES...WITH THEIR OWN PSYCHOKINETIC POWERS...! BUT I SEE NOW WHAT THEY MEANT..
.. ABOUT THE POSSIBLY FATAL CONSEQUENCES.. OF OVEREXERTING THEIR POWER...! IT TURNS AGAINST.. THEIR OWN BODIES...!
THIS TIME . THE CONSEQUENCES WERE FATAL.. .!
ALEC! I THINK I'VE ISOLATED THE THING THAT'S KILLING YOU! I'VE BROUGHT ANTIBIOTICS--
ONE MOMENT, DENNIS, MUCH HAS HAPPENED HERE BUT MOST IMPORTANTLY, THE GOLEM HAS DISAPPEARED.
"..AND BEFORE ANOTHER THING IS DONE, WE MUST FIND IT--BEFORE IT RUNS AMUCK AND ENDANGERS INNOCENT LIVES. COME"
THE SEARCH IS CONTINUING -- WITHOUT SUCCESS-- ONE HOUR LATER.
--AND SO DENNIS, MY MEN DIED TO ENABLE THE GOLEM TO KILL THE GIRL
BUT IT WAS MY FAULT... SHE EVEN LIVED...! SO IT WAS I... WHO HAD TO DO THE .. KILLING...!
BUT PERHAPS "KILL" IS TOO DEFINITE... TOO FINAL A TERM.
IT IS ONLY THE PHYSICAL FORM OF THE ENTITY--A MERE HOUSING, A RECEPTACLE--THAT HAS BEEN ELIMINATED.
THERE ARE OTHER DANGERS FOR THE GROUP, AS WELL:
YOU'RE SPITTING INTO THE WIND. I NEVER HEARD OF ANYONE BLOWING AWAY SIX PEOPLE WITH A SINGLE SHOT BEFORE--
--NOT EVEN WITH A WEAPON LIKE THAT.
DAMN!
WHAT'S WRONG?
CAN'T FIRE TILL THEY'RE OFF THE BRIDGE. I CAN'T VERIFY THE "KILL" IF I LOSE THE BODIES IN THAT STREAM--!
THE SUNDERLAND "OPERATIVES" CANNOT SEE THE ENTITY APPROACH.
13

IT HAPPENS WITHOUT WARNING:
YAAAAH
I LIVE, HOLLAND! DEATH IS BUT A CATERPILLAR SHEDDING ITS COCOON. AN ESCAPE FROM /M
I HAVE TRANSCENDED DEPENDENCE UPON MY PHYSICAL SELF.
THAT "VOICE"! IT'S KAREN'S..!
THE SUDDENLY-CHANGED LIZ LUNGES--AND IN THE RESULTING TANGLE OF BODIES, HER PRODUCER, PAUL FELDNER, LOSES HIS GRIP ON THE WHEEL.
THE LOCKET...! SHE WANTS... THE LOCKET BACK...! BUT WHY..?
THE VEHICLE SWERVES
AND, OUT OF CONTROL, CAREENS INTO A RETAINING WALL AT THE ROADWAY'S EDGE
BEFORE KRIPPTMANN'S MEN CROSSED THE MORTAL BARRIER--AND IN SO DOING, DESTROYED MY BODY--
--THIS, MY ASTRAL FORM, WAS ALREADY POWERFUL ENOUGH TO EXIST IN THE PHYSICAL WORLD.
SKREEE
KRASSH
NOW I CAN MANIPULATE OTHER PHYSICALITIES--SUCH AS THIS WOMAN, TREMAYNE
KNOW, HOLLAND, AS KRIPPTMANN DOES, THAT WHAT EXISTS BEYOND DEATH IS THE UNIVERSE!
THERE ARE INFINITE WORLDS BEYOND WORLDS, WHICH OUR TRUE SELVES--WHAT YOUR METAPHYSICIANS CALL SOULS--
-- ARE FREE TO EXPLORE, ONCE WE CAST OFF THE SHACKLES OF THE BODY
THAT IS WHAT YOU CALL DEATH, HOLLAND. I CALL IT EVOLUTION.
THEN. KAREN DOES... STILL EXIST.!
BUT DEAD OR ALIVE.. OR SOMETHING ELSE ENTIRELY.. I WON'T LET HER SUCCEED!
14

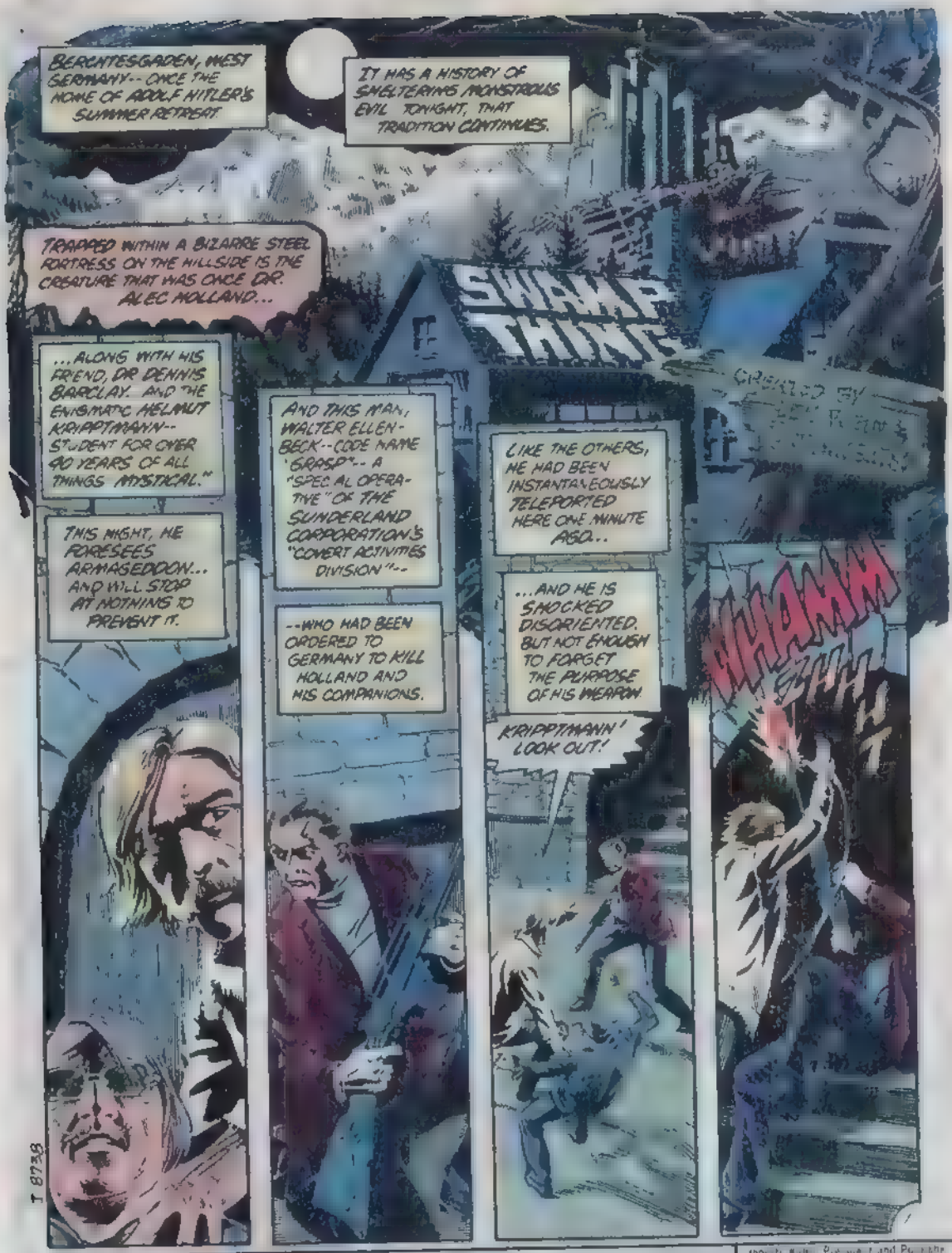
BUT DENNIS, TOO UNDERSTANDS WHAT HAS HAPPENED SO HE FASHIONS A WEAPON TO DEFEND THE GROUP FROM WHATEVER NEW HORRORS AWAIT THEM:
A WOODEN PLANK FROM THE BRIDGE A STRIP OF CLOTH SOAKED IN THE LEAKING GASOLINE
A MAKESHIFT TORCH
HOWEVER
AAAAHH
WHA—WHAT HAPPENED?
YOU LOVE THE WOMAN, BARCLAY AND YOU CALL THE MONSTER A FRIEND
I CAN TAKE EITHER OF THEM—TO RETAIN POSSESSION OF THE LOCKET WOULD YOU USE YOUR PETTY TORCH AGAINST THEM?
ALEC WAS WILLING TO DIE TO STOP YOU BEFORE AND WHILE I HAVE NO RIGHT TO MAKE THAT CHOICE FOR HIM NOW..
..IF THAT'S WHAT IT TAKES—GOD HAVE MERCY ON ME..
...I WILL!
SOMETHING STRUGGLES BENEATH THE MISSHAPEN SURFACE THAT IS ALEC HOLLAND. A WILL TO LIVE
FOR WHAT ELSE COULD HAVE KEPT HIM ALIVE THIS LONG AGAINST SO MANY ODDS?
NO DENNIS .LORD WILLING. THAT WON'T BE NECESSARY!
CONSCIOUSLY, HE MAY BELIEVE HE WOULD WELCOME DEATH. BUT HIS SUBCONSCIOUS IS A WARRIOR AGAINST IT
A WARRIOR WHO HAS NOT YET BEEN VANQUISHED
ALL THAT I HAVE SPOKEN OF IS FACT—THE SCIENCE OF KRIPPTMANN'S SO-CALLED "MYSTICS".
THINGS WHICH TO THE MUNDANE WORLD TODAY ARE THE STUFF OF RELIGION OR HORROR-STORIES.
THINGS CONSIDERED STRICTLY MATTERS OF FAITH OR CONJECTURE—SUCH AS THE SOUL AND THE AFTERLIFE.
ALL THESE WILL BE THE PROVABLE FACT OF TOMORROW
15


WITH THAT POWERFUL KNOWLEDGE, YOU COULD DEFEAT ME. THAT IS WHY ALL OF YOU MUST DIE!
NO! THAT'S EXACTLY WHY YOU WON'T DESTROY US!
YES FOR ALTHOUGH THE ENTITY THAT SEEKS TO POSSESS HIM SPEAKS FROM HIS BODY, HOLLAND'S FIERCE SPIRIT--NOT YET SUBMERGED--RESISTS IT
ALEC--! THAT'S ALEC'S VOICE--!
ALEC--ARE YOU STILL "THERE"..?
YOU, KAREN WHATEVER YOU ARE INSIDE ME IN THE NAME OF GOD...
...I CAST YOU OUT...!!
NO LIFE--NOT EVEN ONE EPHEMERAL AND OTHER-DIMENSIONAL--CAN SURVIVE IN AN OVERWHELMINGLY HOSTILE ENVIRONMENT
HENCE THE ENTITY THAT HAD BEEN KAREN CLANCY CANNOT REMAIN IN HOLLAND.
GAAAAHH
IT DEPARTS
AND THEN, A DISCOVERY
LIZ! SHE'S GONE. AND SO IS THE LOCKET...!
THE ENTITY"... ABDUCTED LIZ "PSYCHOKINETICALLY"..?!
OH MY GOD! THERE SHE IS HOVERING UP THERE!
WHAT HAS THAT THING DONE TO HER..?
OOOOO
BUT THE ONLY ANSWER IS THE SEARING BRILLIANCE THAT STREAKS FROM THE APPARITION--ENVELOPING EVERYONE ON THE BRIDGE BELOW...
AND INSTANTANEOUSLY TRANSPORTING THEM SOMEWHERE ELSE
SOMEWHERE AS YET UNKNOWN
WHILE ABOVE, GRASP ATTEMPTS TO FIRE TOO LATE.
HE, TOO, IS SWALLOWED BY THE LIGHT.
16


AND DISAPPEARS.
THERE IS A LONG SILENCE HERE. MOLLAND AND COMPANY ARE ALREADY MORE THAN A DOZEN MILES AWAY.
WHAT'S THIS...?!
LOOKS LIKE I'M IN SOME KIND OF HUGE, METAL FORTRESS...! "KAREN"'S STRONG-HOLD, NO DOUBT...!
THAT SHADOW...! THE GOLEM...! SHE'S BROUGHT IT HERE, TOO...!
BUT WHY...? IT'S STILL "PROGRAMMED" TO SEEK OUT THE LOCKET...
. AND DESTROY WHOEVER POSSESSES IT...! BUT THE LOCKET DISAPPEARED WHEN LIZ DID--
OH, MY GOD...! LIZ...! IF SHE'S STILL ALIVE... SHE HAS IT...! WHICH MEANS... THE GOLEM WILL KILL HER, TOO...!
WELCOME, ALL OF YOU, HERE, YOU WILL MEET MY MASTER--
-- HE WHOM YOUR SACRED WRITINGS CALL THE BEAST.. THE ANTICHRIST.
I SHALL HELP HIM ACHIEVE HIS DESTINY: HE SHALL BECOME A POWERFUL WORLD LEADER, AND DELIVER EARTH INTO THE HANDS OF THE ENTITY YOU CALL SATAN.
YOU WILL SOON MEET THE BEAST AGAIN
"YOU SEE, YOU KNOW HIM AS IT IS WRITTEN, HE HAS A NUMBER. AND THE NUMBER IS 666."
MS. HAMMOND, DO WE HAVE A REPORT FROM GRASP YET? HE'S OVERDUE.
I'LL CHECK THE COMPUTER, GENERAL. IF THERE HAS BEEN A MESSAGE FROM HIM...
...IT WILL HAVE BEEN TRANSCRIBED INTO THE SYSTEM...
OPERATION?
ACCESS COMMUNICATIONS LOG/SCAN FOR UPDATE
FILE-TITLE?
ELLENBECK, WALTER--C.O.D.
CODE: GRASP
FILE-CODE?
666
"WHEN YOU MEET HIM, YOU WILL LEARN THAT THE REGION YOUR RE-LIGIONISTS CALL HELL DOES EXIST, AND ITS TORMENTS ARE REAL."
FOR MY MASTER AND I WILL CONSIGN EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU TO THAT DIMENSION--
--AND THE GREAT CHANGES THAT WILL TRANS-PIRE ON EARTH YOU SHALL WATCH HELPLESSLY. FROM THE REALM BEYOND DEATH!

NEXT: THE FINAL CONFLICT... INSIDE "THE FORTRESS OF THE BEAST"!

THE SAGA of THE
SWAMP THING
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO 13
MAY
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
KEATES


BERCHTESGADEN, WEST GERMANY-- ONCE THE HOME OF ADOLF HITLER'S SUMMER RETREAT
IT HAS A HISTORY OF SHELTERING MONSTROUS EVIL TONIGHT, THAT TRADITION CONTINUES.
TRAPPED WITHIN A BIZARRE STEEL FORTRESS ON THE HILLSIDE IS THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR. ALEC HOLLAND...
SWAMP THING
...ALONG WITH HIS FRIEND, DR DENNIS BARCLAY. AND THE ENIGMATIC HELMUT KRIPPTMANN-- STUDENT FOR OVER 40 YEARS OF ALL THINGS MYSTICAL."
THIS NIGHT, HE FORESEES ARMAGEDDON... AND WILL STOP AT NOTHING TO PREVENT IT.
AND THIS MAN, WALTER ELLENBECK--CODE NAME "GRASP"-- A "SPECIAL OPERATIVE" OF THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION'S "COVERT ACTIVITIES DIVISION"--
--WHO HAD BEEN ORDERED TO GERMANY TO KILL HOLLAND AND HIS COMPANIONS.
LIKE THE OTHERS, HE HAD BEEN INSTANTANEOUSLY TELEPORTED HERE ONE MINUTE AGO..
...AND HE IS SHOCKED DISORIENTED. BUT NOT ENOUGH TO FORGET THE PURPOSE OF HIS WEAPON.
KRIPPTMANN! LOOK OUT!
CHAMM
T 8738

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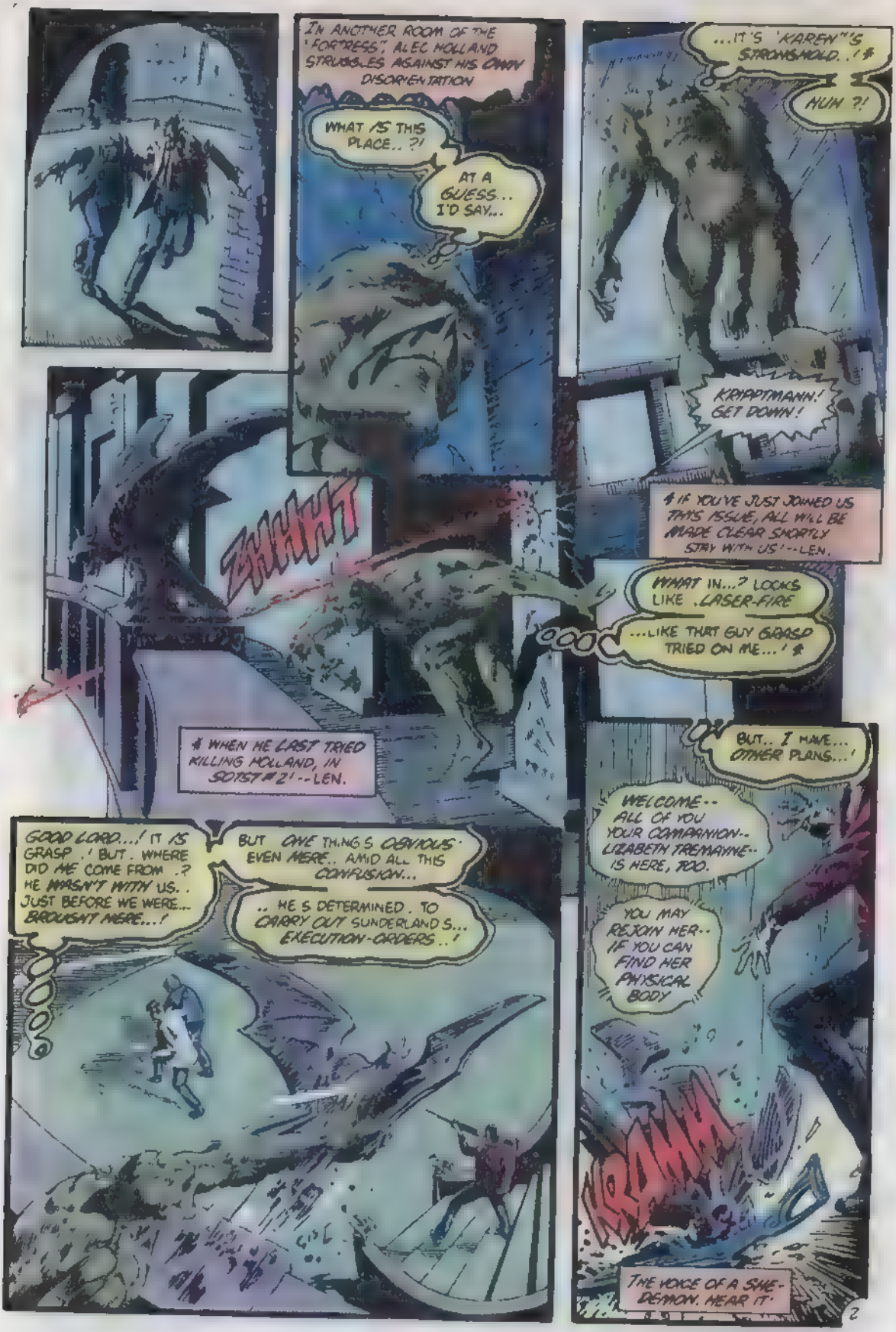
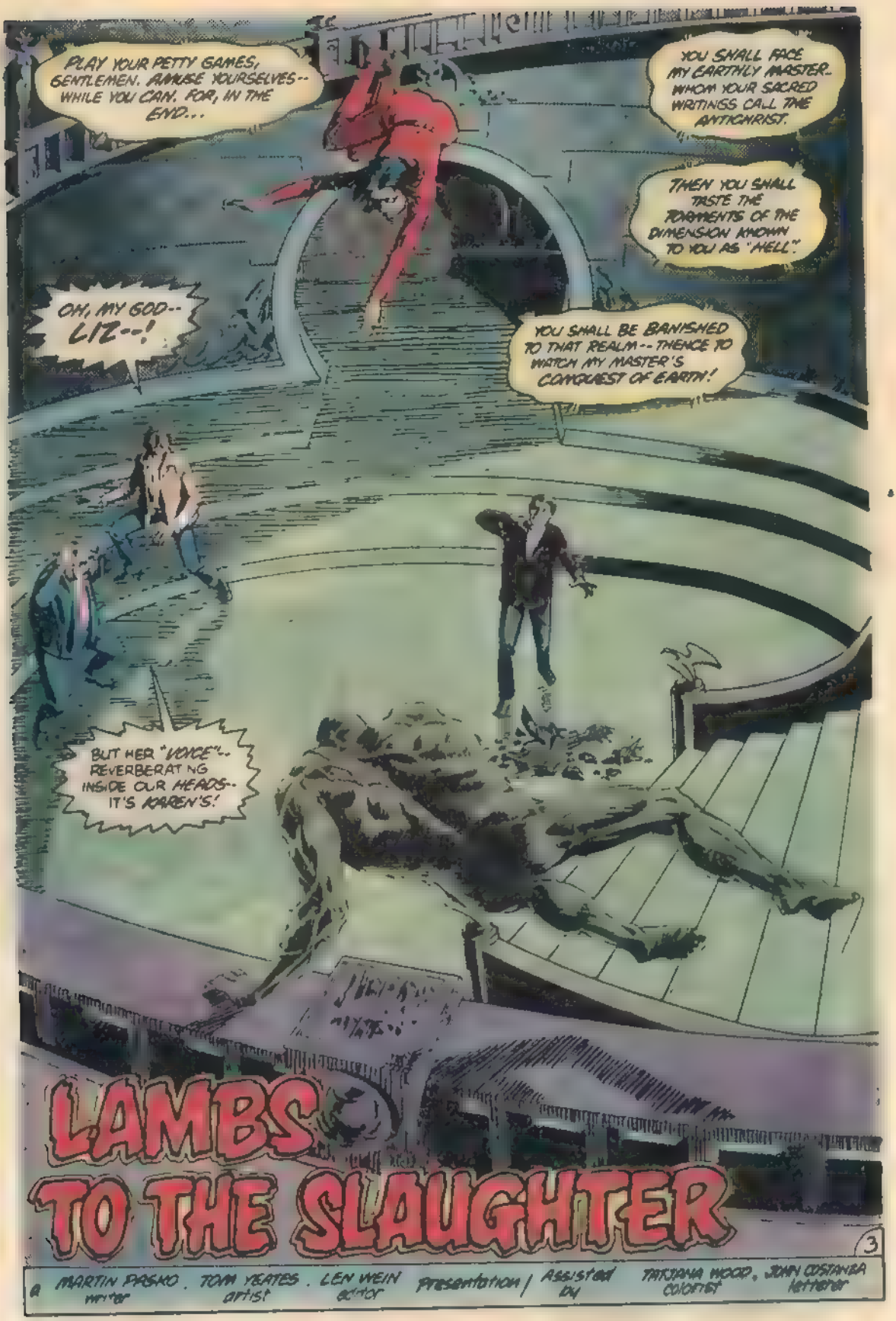
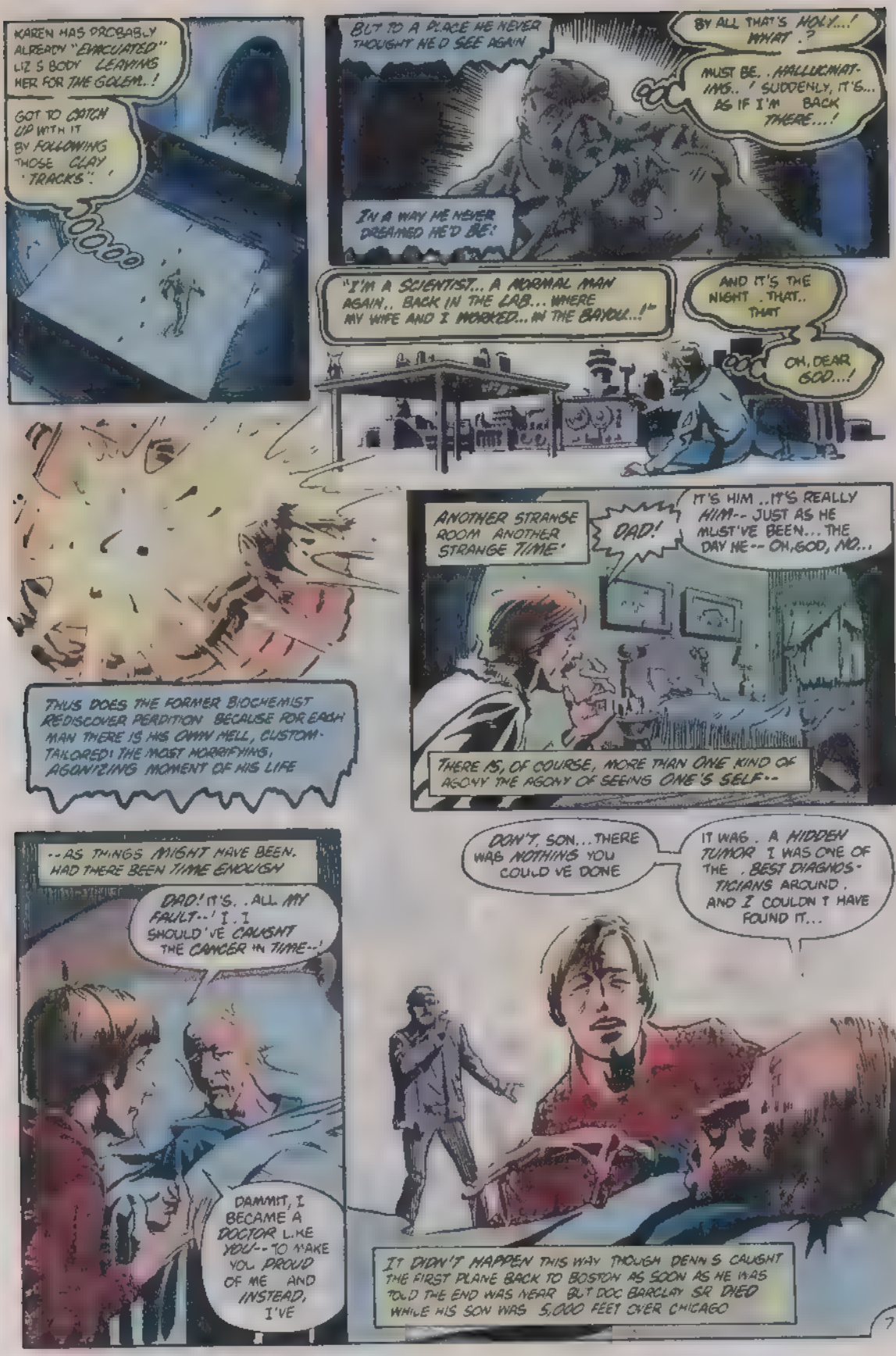

IN ANOTHER ROOM OF THE "FORTRESS", ALEC HOLLAND STRUGGLES AGAINST HIS OWN DISORIENTATION
WHAT IS THIS PLACE..?!
AT A GUESS... I'D SAY...
...IT'S 'KAREN'S STRONGHOLD..!
HUH?!
KRAPTMANN! GET DOWN!
ZWHHT
IF YOU'VE JUST JOINED US THIS ISSUE, ALL WILL BE MADE CLEAR SHORTLY STAY WITH US!--LEN.
WHAT IN...? LOOKS LIKE .LASER-FIRE
...LIKE THAT GUY GRASP TRIED ON ME...!
WHEN HE LAST TRIED KILLING HOLLAND, IN SOTST # 2!--LEN.
BUT.. I HAVE... OTHER PLANS...!
WELCOME-- ALL OF YOU YOUR COMPANION-- LIZABETH TREMAYNE-- IS HERE, TOO.
YOU MAY REJOIN HER-- IF YOU CAN FIND HER PHYSICAL BODY
GOOD LORD...! IT IS GRASP.! BUT. WHERE DID HE COME FROM.? HE WASN'T WITH US.. JUST BEFORE WE WERE... BROUGHT HERE...!
BUT ONE THINGS OBVIOUS EVEN HERE.. AMID ALL THIS CONFUSION...
.. HE'S DETERMINED. TO CARRY OUT SUNDERLAND'S... EXECUTION-ORDERS..!
KRAMA
THE VOICE OF A SHE-DEMON. HEAR IT.
2


PLAY YOUR PETTY GAMES, GENTLEMEN. AMUSE YOURSELVES-- WHILE YOU CAN. FOR, IN THE END...
YOU SHALL FACE MY EARTHLY MASTER.. WHOM YOUR SACRED WRITINGS CALL THE ANTICHRIST.
THEN YOU SHALL TASTE THE TORMENTS OF THE DIMENSION KNOWN TO YOU AS "HELL".
OH, MY GOD-- LIZ--!
YOU SHALL BE BANISHED TO THAT REALM-- THENCE TO WATCH MY MASTER'S CONQUEST OF EARTH!
BUT HER "VOICE".. REVERBERATING INSIDE OUR HEADS.. IT'S KAREN'S!
LAMBS TO THE SLAUGHTER
3
a MARTIN PASKO writer . TOM YEATES artist . LEN WEIN editor Presentation / Assistant by TATJANA WOOD, colorist . JOHN COSTANZA letterer

YOU KNOW THE TRUTHS OF WHAT THE MODERN WORLD DISMISSES AS METAPHYSICS, MY ENEMIES
WHEN I LIVED AS KAREN CLANCY, YOU CALLED ME MUTANT INDEED, MY PHYSICAL SELF WAS A MUTATION...
...FOR EVEN WHILE CONFINED WITHIN THAT HUMAN FORM, I COULD WIELD MY POWERS OF "TELEPATHY" AND "PSYCHOKINESIS."
THAT PHYSICAL BODY IS DESTROYED NOW, BUT MY DEATH HAS MERELY FREED MY ASTRAL SELF--WHAT SOME MEN MIGHT CALL MY SOUL--
--AND MADE IT MORE POWERFUL, NOW IT CAN INHABIT THE PHYSICAL WORLD. AND "POSSESS" OTHERS--
--SUCH AS THIS WOMAN, TREMAYNE
SOON "THE ANTICHRIST" SHALL DELIVER EARTH INTO THE HANDS OF MY ULTIMATE MASTER--THE ENTITY YOU CALL "SATAN."
BUT YOU KNOW ALL THIS, AND MORE THAT MAKES YOU DANGEROUS TO ME. THEREFORE, YOU HAVE BEEN BROUGHT HERE--
--TO THE BODY OF "THE BEAST," AS IT WERE--
--TO BE ELIMINATED.
BEFORE THE COMBATANTS CAN COLLECT THEMSELVES, SHE HURLS A SPHERE OF UNEARTHLY LIGHT TOWARD THEM.
IT FLINGS HOLLAND ASIDE, THEN CONSUMES GRASP.. AND WHEN IT FADES, THE WOULD-BE ASSASSIN HAS BEEN SPIRITED AWAY--

--TO PREPARE HIM FOR HIS ROLE IN BRINGING ABOUT THE END OF THE WORLD. IN ANOTHER INSTANT, THE "POSSESSED" LIZ TREMAYNE VANISHES AS WELL
KRIPPTMANN! WHY ARE WE "DANGEROUS"? WHAT DID SHE MEAN?
OBVIOUSLY, DENNIS, SHE THINKS THAT IN MY STUDIES I'VE LEARNED SOME.. "KEY" TO DEFEATING HER
ALL RIGHT BUT BE CAREFUL, BOTH OF YOU SHE BROUGHT US HERE TO KILL US LORD KNOWS WHAT AWAITS US IN THE OTHER ROOMS!
THEN THERE IS SOME SECRET YOU SIMPLY HAVEN'T STUMBLED ONTO YET...?
EVIDENTLY. BUT THE QUESTION IS... WILL WE FIND IT IN TIME?
FIRST THING..! FIND... LIZ...!
ALEC'S RIGHT LOOK-- THERE'S AT LEAST THREE WAYS OUT. WE'VE GOTTA SPLIT UP.
SUPPRESSING THEIR DREAD, THEY PART-- LEAVING MOLLAND TO RACK HIS MEMORY, SEARCHING FOR A CLUE TO DEFEATING THEIR OTHER-DIMENSIONAL ENEMY.
SHE WAS... A MUTE LITTLE ORPHAN-GIRL WHEN I FOUND HER...' TOOK CARE OF HER...FOR WEEKS...'
SEEMED SO... INNOCENT..' HOW COULD I KNOW...
.. TILL SHE REVEALED HERSELF.. TO BE AN ENTITY CALLED... A 'HERALD OF THE ANTICHRIST'..
ONE OF WHICH PERIODICALLY... APPEARS ON THE MORTAL PLANE...
...TO PREPARE THE EARTH FOR ARMAGEDDON. THE FINAL BATTLE BETWEEN GOOD AND EVIL. AS PROPHESIED IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION ...'
".. SHE WOULD SOON SPEED UP HER OWN GROWTH PROCESS.. CAUSING HER POWERS TO MATURE.. TO FULL STRENGTH...
"...BY SIPHONING OFF.. THE PSIONIC ENERGY OF OTHERS WITH POWERS LIKE HERS...?"
5

"THANK GOD. HE'D LEARNED EARLIER .. THAT THE GIRL'S MOTHER WAS STILL ALIVE ..!"
TAKE THIS LOCKET-- IT BELONGED TO KAREN. IT'LL HELP YOU FIND HER... AND WHEN YOU DO, KILL HER!
"SOMEHOW THE LOCKET ENABLED ME TO SENSE HER PRESENCE.. KNOW HER WHEREABOUTS...!
"WE COULDN'T HAVE TRACKED... HER TO GERMANY. WITHOUT IT..! BUT... STILL... HOW CAN WE DESTROY HER...? KRIPPTMANN AND HIS FOLLOWERS TRIED ONCE AND FAILED..
"... WHEN THEY FASHIONED A GOLEM. AN AVENGING CLAY MONSTER FROM ANCIENT JEWISH FOLKLORE TO SLAY HER ...!
'SLAIN BY KAREN LAST ISSUE!' -- LEN
"...OR I FAILED. ' I FELT THAT KILLING HER .. WAS MY RESPONSIBILITY. ' AFTER ALL, IF I HADN'T PREVENTED HER FATHER FROM SHOOTING HER WHEN I FIRST ENCOUNTERED HER. SHE WOULDN'T BE ALIVE TODAY '
"BUT ONLY HER BODY 'DIED'.. HER.. 'SOUL' LIVED ON.. ' AND IN AN ATTEMPT TO TAKE BACK THE LOCKET.. SHE 'POSSESSED' FIRST ME . THEN LIZ.. !"
LIZ DISAPPEARED.. WITH THE LOCKET. SHORTLY BEFORE WE WERE ALL TRANSPORTED HERE..!
AND EVIDENTLY, THE GOLEM GOT HERE SOMEHOW, TOO... AFTER KRIPPTMANN LOST TRACK OF IT '
IT'S STILL 'PROGRAMMED' TO SEEK OUT THE LOCKET..
.. AND MURDER WHOEVER POSSESSES IT--?'
SO. THAT'S WHY KAREN WANTED LIZ.. TO HAVE THE LOCKET. ! SHE PROBABLY EVEN . BROUGHT THAT MONSTROSITY HERE .
. KNOWING IT WOULD ATTEMPT TO KILL LIZ...!


KAREN HAS PROBABLY ALREADY "EVACUATED" LIZ'S BODY LEAVING HER FOR THE GOLEM..!
GOT TO CATCH UP WITH IT BY FOLLOWING THOSE CLAY 'TRACKS'.
BUT TO A PLACE HE NEVER THOUGHT HE'D SEE AGAIN
IN A WAY HE NEVER DREAMED HE'D BE!
BY ALL THAT'S HOLY...! WHAT.?
MUST BE.. HALLUCINATIONS.. ! SUDDENLY, IT'S... AS IF I'M BACK THERE...!
"I'M A SCIENTIST.. A NORMAL MAN AGAIN.. BACK IN THE LAB... WHERE MY WIFE AND I WORKED... IN THE BAYOU...!"
AND IT'S THE NIGHT.. THAT.. THAT
OH, DEAR GOD...!
ANOTHER STRANGE ROOM ANOTHER STRANGE TIME'
DAD!
IT'S HIM.. IT'S REALLY HIM-- JUST AS HE MUST'VE BEEN... THE DAY HE-- OH, GOD, NO...
THERE IS, OF COURSE, MORE THAN ONE KIND OF AGONY THE AGONY OF SEEING ONE'S SELF--
THUS DOES THE FORMER BIOCHEMIST REDISCOVER PERDITION BECAUSE FOR EACH MAN THERE IS HIS OWN HELL, CUSTOM-TAILORED! THE MOST HORRIFYING, AGONIZING MOMENT OF HIS LIFE
--AS THINGS MIGHT HAVE BEEN. HAD THERE BEEN TIME ENOUGH
DAD! IT'S.. ALL MY FAULT--! I.I SHOULD'VE CAUGHT THE CANCER IN TIME--!
DON'T, SON... THERE WAS NOTHING YOU COULD'VE DONE
IT WAS. A HIDDEN TUMOR I WAS ONE OF THE. BEST DIAGNOSTICIANS AROUND. AND I COULDN'T HAVE FOUND IT...
DAMMIT, I BECAME A DOCTOR LIKE YOU-- TO MAKE YOU PROUD OF ME AND INSTEAD, I'VE
IT DIDN'T HAPPEN THIS WAY THOUGH DENNIS CAUGHT THE FIRST PLANE BACK TO BOSTON AS SOON AS HE WAS TOLD THE END WAS NEAR BUT DOC BARCLAY SR DIED WHILE HIS SON WAS 5,000 FEET OVER CHICAGO

I AM PROUD OF YOU, DENNY..

DAD DAD, I... I LOVE YOU.

NO!

THE THINGS THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN-- THE WORDS THAT COULD HAVE BEEN SPOKEN BUT WEREN'T...THE ABSOLUTION THAT MIGHT HAVE COME BUT DIDN'T-- CONSTITUTE ANOTHER KIND OF HELL.

AND ONE INCAUTIOUS GESTURE--A DESPERATE REACHING OUT FOR SOMETHING THAT CANNOT BE, BECAUSE IT NEVER WAS--

-- OPENS THE DOOR TO YET ANOTHER:

YAAAH

WHILE INSIDE ALEC HOLLAND'S MIND, THERE IS STILL THE SAME HELL-- AND MORE THAN TORTURE ENOUGH FOR HALF A DOZEN MEN...

...BUT, APPARENTLY, NOT AMUSEMENT ENOUGH FOR THE ARCHITECT OF THAT TORTURE.

WAIT. .' THE LAB .. IT'S GONE...' I. I'M SOMEWHERE ELSE.. ?'

I'VE BEEN EXPECTING.. SOME KIND OF TRAP...' LOOKS LIKE KAREN HASN'T 'DISAPPOINTED"..'

SHE'S MAKING ME HALLUCINATE .A RE-ENACTMENT OF THE ACCIDENT .. THAT 'CREATED" ME ! LURING ME INTO..

...THIS...' ANY SECOND NOW...THOSE WALLS WILL START TO... CLOSE IN...

...AND THOSE "TEETH"... WILL "BITE" ME... IN HALF...!

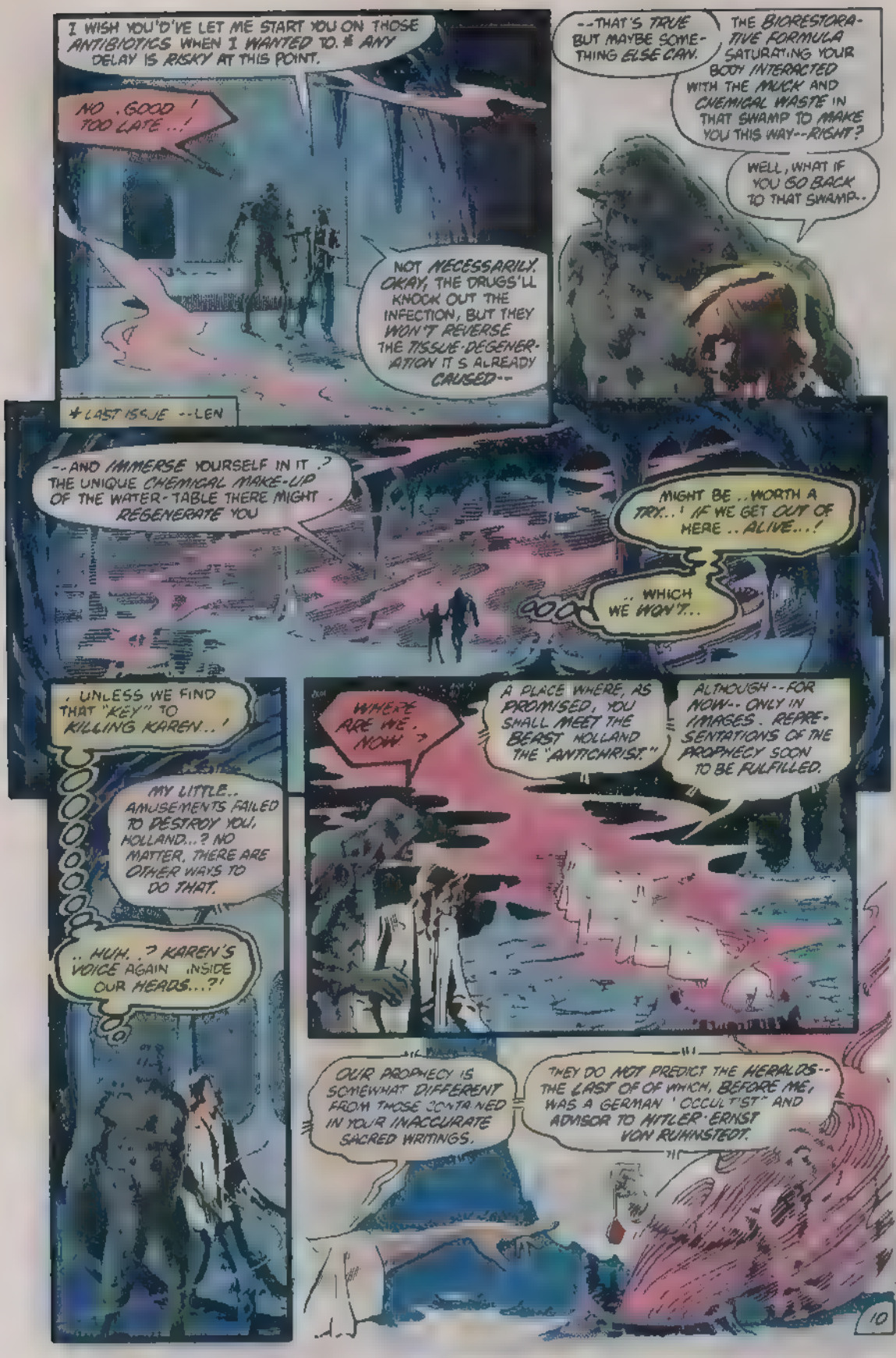
I'LL BET SHE'S DOING THIS, TO THE OTHERS, TOO'

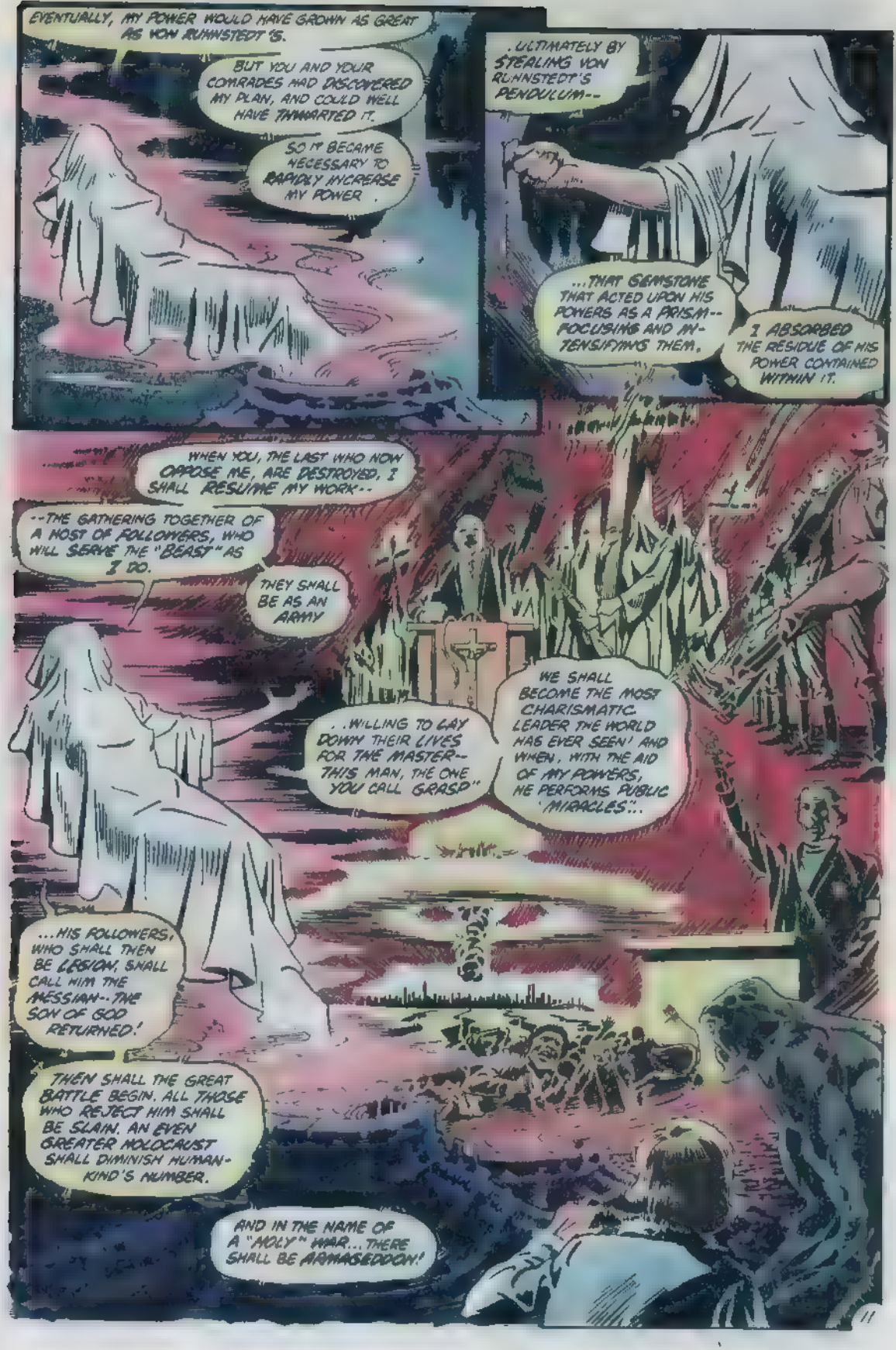
TOYING WITH US...PLUCKING HELLISH MOMENTS FROM OUR MEMORIES...TURNING THEM AGAINST US...IN NEW, EVEN MORE TERRIFYING WAYS...!

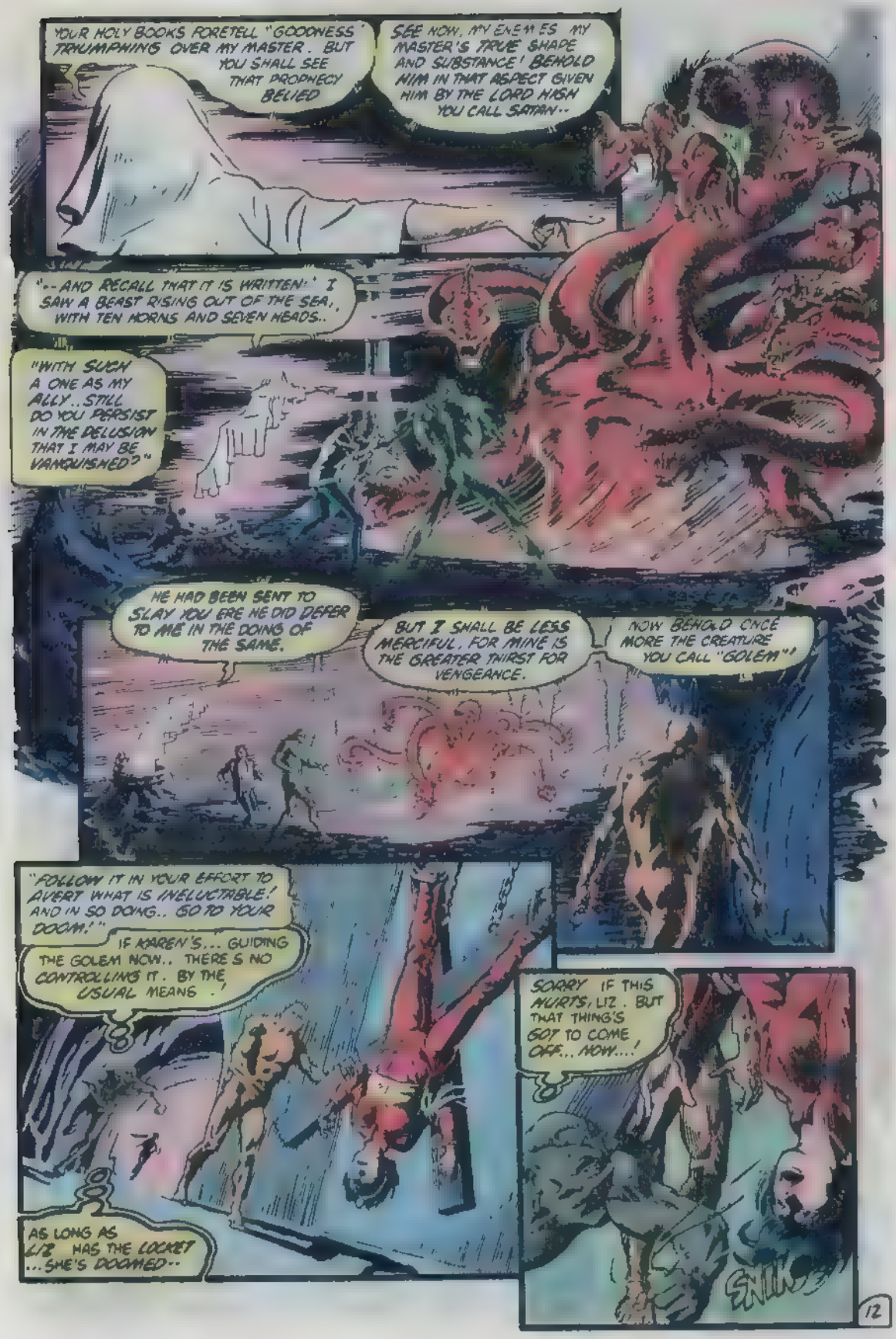
MOCKING US... EVEN AS SHE... KILLS US!

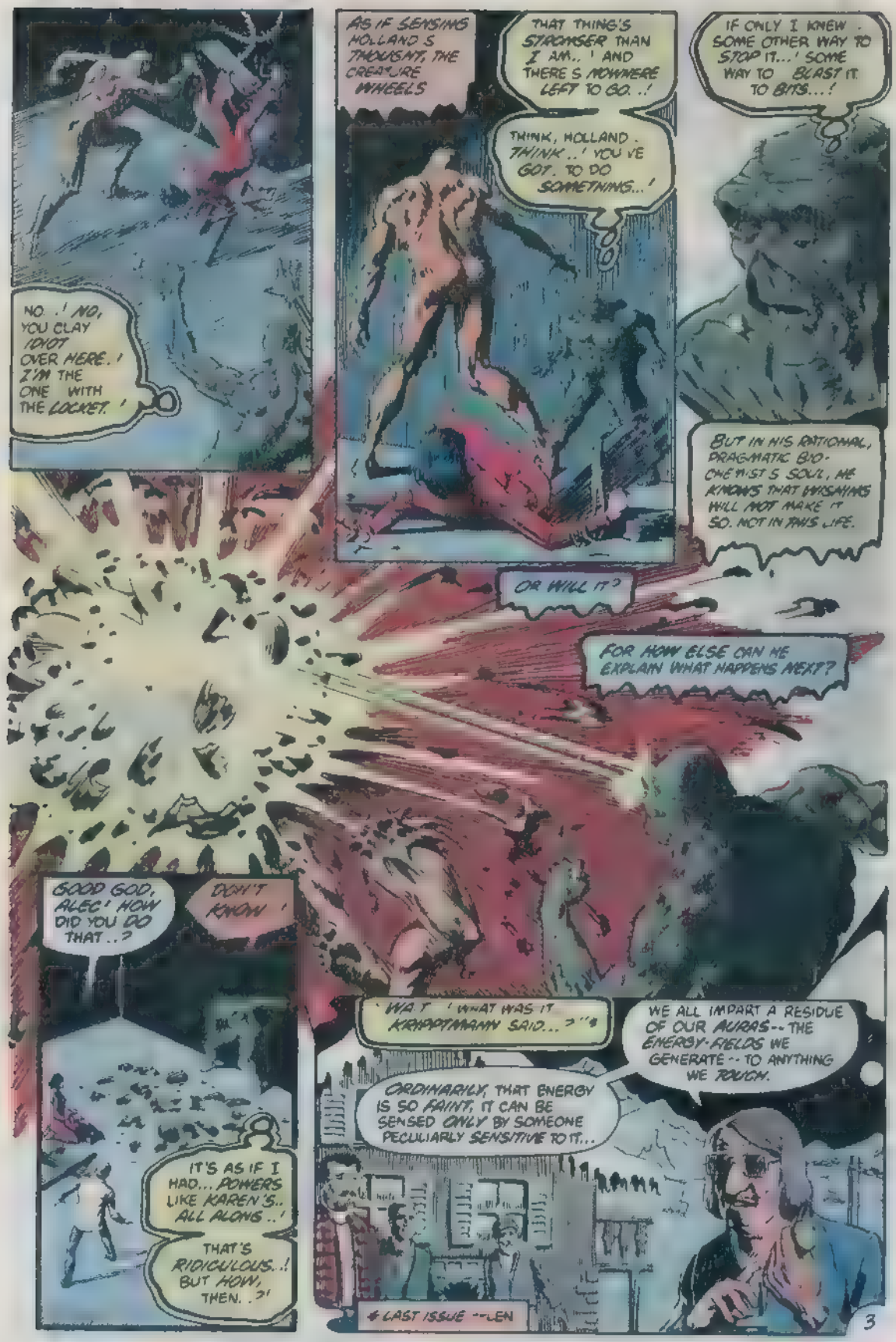
WELL. I WON'T GIVE HER.. THAT SATISFACTION...!

"I'LL LIVE . TO SEE HER PAY FOR WHAT SHE'S DONE . IF IT TAKES... MY LAST BREATH..!"
.MADE IT...!
KLANG
BUT DENNIS MAY NOT BE SO FORTUNATE. DIRECTLY ABOVE, HE DISCOVERS THAT HIS "PIT" IS NOT MERELY A SAND-PIT, BUT--
--A WHIRLPOOL-- SUCKING ME UNDER--!
K K K CHU UU UU..
UGH
YAAAAH
DENNIS. HEADING STRAIGHT FOR THAT.. PIT ! AND IT . LOOKS.. BOTTOMLESS..!
THE FALL WILL.. KILL HIM
".. UNLESS. ."
UNNH!
ALEC-- YOU ALL RIGHT?
FEEL..WEAK..! DIZZY..!
OF COURSE YOU DO IT'S THAT BACTERIAL INFECTION IN YOUR BODY--
--IT'LL KILL YOU INSIDE TWO MONTHS UNLESS IT'S TREATED
10


I WISH YOU'D'VE LET ME START YOU ON THOSE ANTIBIOTICS WHEN I WANTED TO. ANY DELAY IS RISKY AT THIS POINT.
NO . GOOD ! TOO LATE . . !
NOT NECESSARILY. OKAY, THE DRUGS'LL KNOCK OUT THE INFECTION, BUT THEY WON'T REVERSE THE TISSUE-DEGENERATION IT S ALREADY CAUSED--
--THAT'S TRUE BUT MAYBE SOMETHING ELSE CAN.
THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA SATURATING YOUR BODY INTERACTED WITH THE MUCK AND CHEMICAL WASTE IN THAT SWAMP TO MAKE YOU THIS WAY--RIGHT?
WELL, WHAT IF YOU GO BACK TO THAT SWAMP..
+LAST ISSUE --LEN
--AND IMMERSE YOURSELF IN IT .? THE UNIQUE CHEMICAL MAKE-UP OF THE WATER-TABLE THERE MIGHT REGENERATE YOU
MIGHT BE . . WORTH A TRY . . ! IF WE GET OUT OF HERE . . ALIVE . . . !
. . WHICH WE WON'T . . .
. UNLESS WE FIND THAT "KEY" TO KILLING KAREN . . !
MY LITTLE . . AMUSEMENTS FAILED TO DESTROY YOU, HOLLAND . . . ? NO MATTER, THERE ARE OTHER WAYS TO DO THAT.
. . HUH . . ? KAREN'S VOICE AGAIN INSIDE OUR HEADS . . . ?!
WHERE ARE WE . NOW . ?
A PLACE WHERE, AS PROMISED, YOU SHALL MEET THE BEAST HOLLAND THE "ANTICHRIST."
ALTHOUGH--FOR NOW--ONLY IN IMAGES . REPRESENTATIONS OF THE PROPHECY SOON TO BE FULFILLED.
OUR PROPHECY IS SOMEWHAT DIFFERENT FROM THOSE CONTAINED IN YOUR INACCURATE SACRED WRITINGS.
THEY DO NOT PREDICT THE HERALDS--THE LAST OF OF WHICH, BEFORE ME, WAS A GERMAN 'OCCULTIST" AND ADVISOR TO HITLER-ERNST VON RUHNSTEDT.
10


EVENTUALLY, MY POWER WOULD HAVE GROWN AS GREAT AS VON RUHNSTEDT'S.
BUT YOU AND YOUR COMRADES HAD DISCOVERED MY PLAN, AND COULD WELL HAVE THWARTED IT.
SO IT BECAME NECESSARY TO RAPIDLY INCREASE MY POWER.
. ULTIMATELY BY STEALING VON RUHNSTEDT'S PENDULUM--
...THAT GEMSTONE THAT ACTED UPON HIS POWERS AS A PRISM-- FOCUSING AND IN-TENSIFYING THEM.
I ABSORBED THE RESIDUE OF HIS POWER CONTAINED WITHIN IT.
WHEN YOU, THE LAST WHO NOW OPPOSE ME, ARE DESTROYED, I SHALL RESUME MY WORK--
--THE GATHERING TOGETHER OF A HOST OF FOLLOWERS, WHO WILL SERVE THE "BEAST" AS I DO.
THEY SHALL BE AS AN ARMY
. . .WILLING TO LAY DOWN THEIR LIVES FOR THE MASTER-- THIS MAN, THE ONE YOU CALL GRASP"
WE SHALL BECOME THE MOST CHARISMATIC LEADER THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN! AND WHEN, WITH THE AID OF MY POWERS, HE PERFORMS PUBLIC MIRACLES"..
...HIS FOLLOWERS, WHO SHALL THEN BE LEGION, SHALL CALL HIM THE MESSIAH--THE SON OF GOD RETURNED!
THEN SHALL THE GREAT BATTLE BEGIN. ALL THOSE WHO REJECT HIM SHALL BE SLAIN. AN EVEN GREATER HOLOCAUST SHALL DIMINISH HUMAN-KIND'S NUMBER.
AND IN THE NAME OF A "HOLY" WAR... THERE SHALL BE ARMAGEDDON!

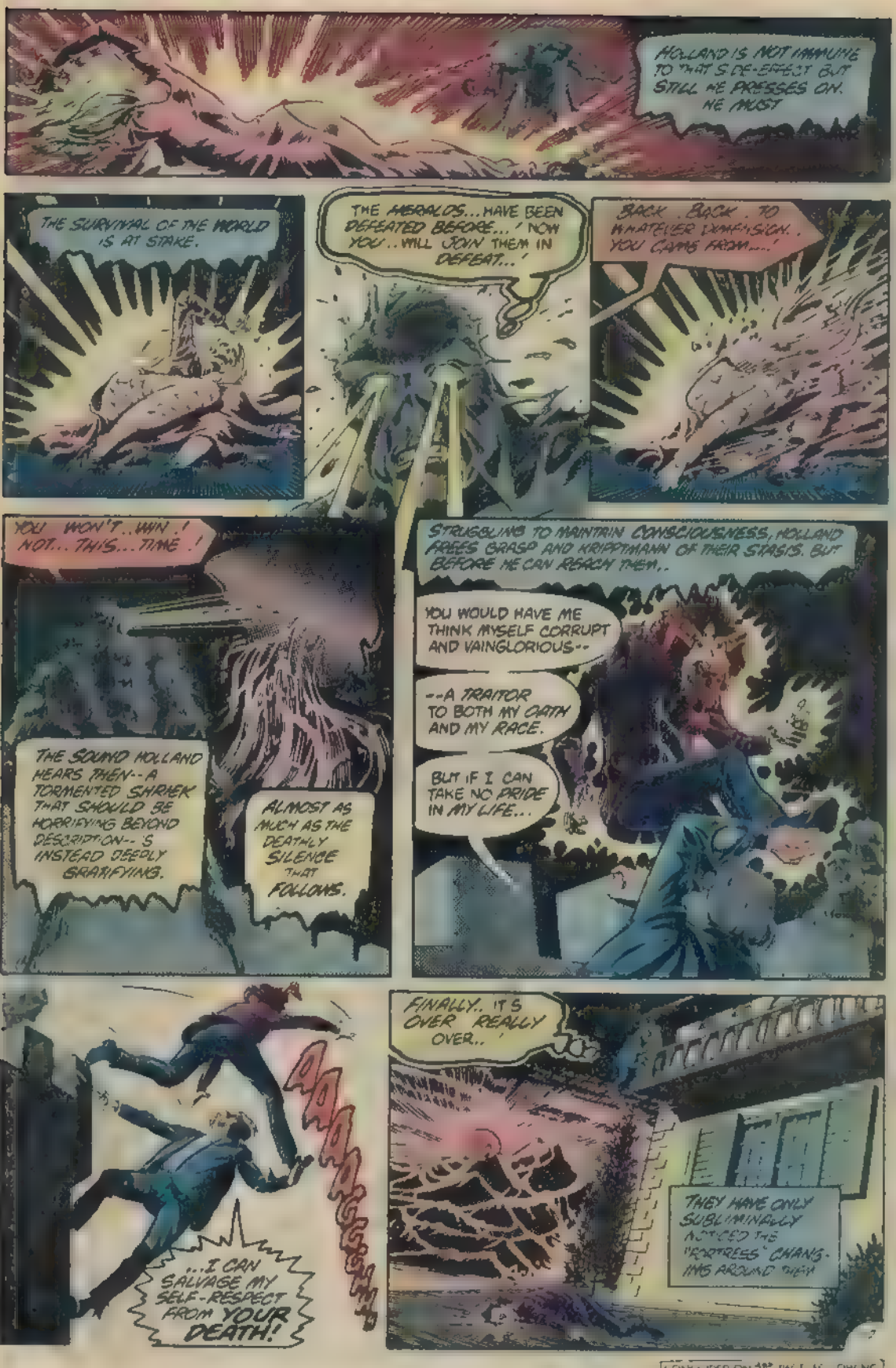

YOUR HOLY BOOKS FORETELL "GOODNESS" TRIUMPHING OVER MY MASTER. BUT YOU SHALL SEE THAT PROPHECY BELIED
SEE NOW, MY ENEMIES MY MASTER'S TRUE SHAPE AND SUBSTANCE! BEHOLD HIM IN THAT ASPECT GIVEN HIM BY THE LORD HIGH YOU CALL SATAN..
"-- AND RECALL THAT IT IS WRITTEN:' I SAW A BEAST RISING OUT OF THE SEA, WITH TEN HORNS AND SEVEN HEADS..
"WITH SUCH A ONE AS MY ALLY.. STILL DO YOU PERSIST IN THE DELUSION THAT I MAY BE VANQUISHED?"
HE HAD BEEN SENT TO SLAY YOU ERE HE DID DEFER TO ME IN THE DOING OF THE SAME.
BUT I SHALL BE LESS MERCIFUL, FOR MINE IS THE GREATER THIRST FOR VENGEANCE.
NOW BEHOLD ONCE MORE THE CREATURE YOU CALL "GOLEM"!
"FOLLOW IT IN YOUR EFFORT TO AVERT WHAT IS INELUCTABLE! AND IN SO DOING.. GO TO YOUR DOOM!"
IF KAREN'S... GUIDING THE GOLEM NOW.. THERE'S NO CONTROLLING IT. BY THE USUAL MEANS.'
AS LONG AS LIZ HAS THE LOCKET ...SHE'S DOOMED..
SORRY IF THIS HURTS, LIZ. BUT THAT THING'S GOT TO COME OFF... NOW...!
SNIK
12


NO..! NO, YOU CLAY IDIOT OVER HERE..! I'M THE ONE WITH THE LOCKET..!
AS IF SENSING HOLLAND'S THOUGHT, THE CREATURE WHEELS
THAT THING'S STRONGER THAN I AM..! AND THERE'S NOWHERE LEFT TO GO..!
THINK, HOLLAND. THINK..! YOU'VE GOT. TO DO SOMETHING...!
IF ONLY I KNEW. SOME OTHER WAY TO STOP IT...! SOME WAY TO BLAST IT TO BITS...!
BUT IN HIS RATIONAL, PRAGMATIC BIO-CHEMIST'S SOUL, HE KNOWS THAT WISHING WILL NOT MAKE IT SO. NOT IN THIS LIFE.
OR WILL IT?
FOR HOW ELSE CAN HE EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?
GOOD GOD, ALEC! HOW DID YOU DO THAT..?
DON'T KNOW!
IT'S AS IF I HAD... POWERS LIKE KAREN'S.. ALL ALONG..!
THAT'S RIDICULOUS..! BUT HOW, THEN..?!
WAIT! WHAT WAS IT KRIPPTMANN SAID...?"*
WE ALL IMPART A RESIDUE OF OUR AURAS-- THE ENERGY-FIELDS WE GENERATE-- TO ANYTHING WE TOUCH.
ORDINARILY, THAT ENERGY IS SO FAINT, IT CAN BE SENSED ONLY BY SOMEONE PECULIARLY SENSITIVE TO IT...
* LAST ISSUE --LEN

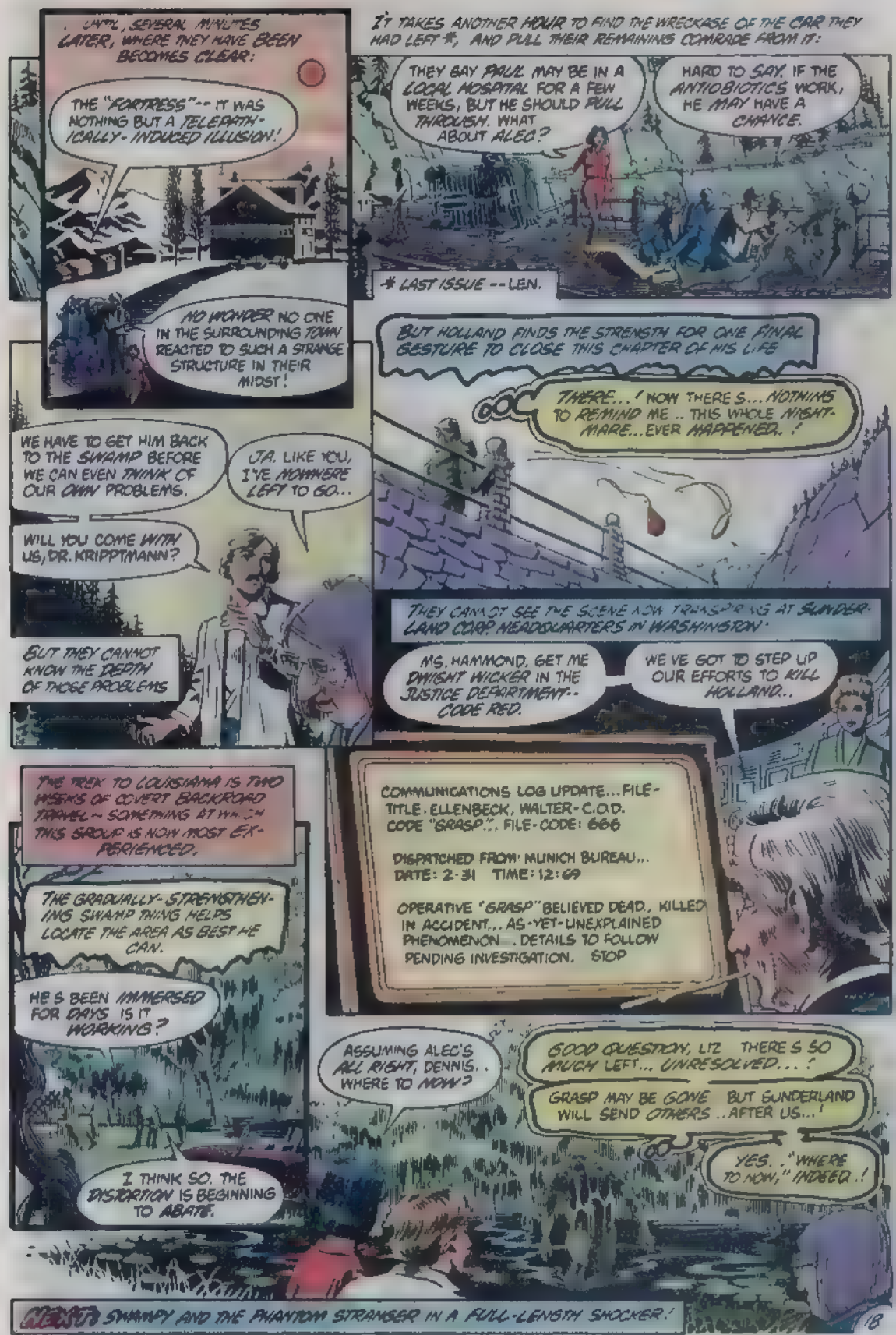
BUT KAREN GENERATES MUCH GREATER ENERGY-- THUS, ANYONE WHO TOUCHES THIS LOCKET IS AFFECTED BY IT...
THAT'S WHY. I WAS ABLE TO SENSE HER WHEREABOUTS...!
BUT WHEN I "TAPPED INTO HER AURA. COULD SOME OF HER.. PSYCHOKINETIC ABILITY HAVE "RUBBED OFF" ON ME ?
IT MUST HAVE ! I'M DEFYING GRAVITY.. BY SHEER FORCE OF WILL...!
I.. I'VE ABSORBED SOME OF HER POWER THE SAME WAY SHE ABSORBED VON RUHNSTEDT'S .. FROM THE PENDULUM..!
YES..! THAT'S IT...! THE KEY TO DEFEATING HER...!
DR HELMUT KRIPPTMANN WHO ALL THIS TIME HAS BEEN DEEP WITHIN HIS OWN PRIVATE HELL, WILL PROVIDE AN OPPORTUNITY TO TEST HOLLAND'S THEORY
HE HAD BEEN A KAPO PRISONER AT DACHAU-- CO OPERATING WITH THE NAZIS IN THE VAIN HOPE THAT HE COULD SOME-HOW HELP HIS PEOPLE MORE THAT WAY.
AND SO HE PARTICIPATED IN HIS SUPERIORS GHASTLY EXPERIMENTS ON THOSE THEY EXTER-MINATED... WILLING HIMSELF TO FEEL NOTHING.
UNTIL THERE CAME TO HIS DISSECTION-TABLE A FACE THAT WAS UNEXPECTEDLY FAMILIAR
ESTHER--!
HE RETURNS TO A PRESENT DAY REALITY EQUALLY NIGHTMARISH, ITS ONLY DIFFERENCE ITS SOME-WHAT SHARPER FOCUS
I WANTED TO FINISH YOU OFF PERSONALLY
YOU--!
HAH YOU NEVER GUESSED THAT YOU KNEW THE "ANTICHRIST" YOU WERE SO OBSESSED WITH!

UH-HUH. THE BOOK'S RIGHT ABOUT ONE THING -- "666" IS "THE NUMBER OF THE BEAST."
OLD GENERAL SUNDERLAND HASN'T A CLUE TO HOW 'BEASTLY,' EITHER. BUT JUST WAIT'LL I ICE THAT SUCKER AND TAKE OVER
OPERATION?
ACCESS COMMUNICATIONS...OO SCAN FOR UPDATE
FILE TITLE?
ELLENBECK WALTER-- C.O.O
CODE BARB
FILE CODE?
666
TAKE CONTROL... OF THE COMPANY..?
OF COURSE A MULTI-NATIONAL CORPORATION LIKE THAT--WITH ITS MILITARY CONNECTIONS-?
I NEED A POWER BASE FOR CONSCRIPTING MY OWN ARMY, N.K. AND SUNDERLAND FITS THE BILL PERFECTLY
I'VE GOT A SECRET, KAREN OR WHATEVER YOU CALL YOURSELF...!
AND IT'S YOURS...!
OH, NO! NO...!
BA-BAM!
THE ELEMENT OF SURPRISE HOLLAND WILL NOT HAVE THE ADVANTAGE IT GIVES HIM FOR LONG.
HE KNOWS HE MUST STRIKE SWIFTLY, UNHESITATINGLY
HE KNOWS SHE IS INCORPOREAL NOW -- A SPECTRE PLAYING WITH HIS MIND.
IN THE LEGEND OF THE DEMON BEELZEBUB -- THE "LORD OF THE FLIES"... THE ENTITY FINDS A MALEVOLENT INSPIRATION.
BUT THE PLOY IS UNSUCCESSFUL.
TRYING TO... "PSYCH ME OUT"...?!
NO DICE...! AFTER MY 'RETURN VISIT'... TO MY LAB...
5

. I KNOW BETTER THAN TO LET MYSELF BE DISTRACTED.. BY ANY HORROR SHE SHOWS ME NOW...'
CAN'T LET IT DETER ME... FROM GRABBING THE PENDULUM..!
THIS IS IT...! THE KEY.. TO
ABSORB VON RUHNSTEDT'S POWER. FROM THE PENDULUM... JUST AS SHE DID...
NO!...NO!
...AND USE IT.. AGAINST HER...!
BUT CAN ME DO SO IN TIME TO ALSO AVERT...
...WHAT IS HAPPENING ELSEWHERE ON THE PARAPET, SIMULTANEOUSLY?
WE WORKED TOGETHER ONCE BEFORE, HERR DOKTOR-- YOU UNDER ANOTHER NAME
BUT NOW, OUR TRUE NATURES ARE REVEALED: YOU ARE, ULTIMATELY, ONLY A HEALER AND I AM, AT LAST, A KILLER.
IN YOUR GUILT OVER THE LIES THAT ARE YOUR LIFE, YOU'VE SOUGHT TO DENY ME AND OUR ASSOCIATION.
KNOW, KRIPPTMANN, AS YOU GO TO YOUR DEATH THAT YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO JUDGE ME.
YOU TAKE UP YOUR SCALPEL AND CAN SAVE A MAN'S LIFE. I TAKE UP MY WEAPON AND CAN END IT.
BUT EITHER WAY, WE BOTH KNOW WHAT IT IS TO HOLD A MAN'S LIFE IN OUR HANDS.
AND IT THRILLS US BOTH THE SAME
SUDDENLY, BEFORE KRIPPTMANN'S HAND CAN SLIP TIME IT-SELF SEEMS TO SLIP AWAY
THE SENSATIONS OF TIME AND SPACE ARE SHATTERED, RENDERED MEANINGLESS--AS ALL MOVEMENT IS SUSPENDED.
GRASP AND KRIPPTMANN ARE IMMOBILIZED PSYCHOKINETICALLY.
...BY AN HERCULEAN EFFORT OF WILL WHICH MAY ULTIMATELY PROVE FATAL FOR ALEC HOLLAND.
PAST A CERTAIN LEVEL OF INTENSITY THE PSYCHO-KINETIC POWER TURNS INWARD WREAKING HAVOC WITH THE CELLS OF THE BODY GENERATING IT


HOLLAND IS NOT IMMUNE TO THAT SIDE-EFFECT BUT STILL HE PRESSES ON. HE MUST
THE SURVIVAL OF THE WORLD IS AT STAKE.
THE HERALDS... HAVE BEEN DEFEATED BEFORE...' NOW YOU.. WILL JOIN THEM IN DEFEAT...'
BACK . BACK . TO WHATEVER DIMENSION . YOU CAME FROM....'
YOU WON'T..WIN ! NOT... THIS... TIME !
THE SOUND HOLLAND HEARS THEN-- A TORMENTED SHRIEK THAT SHOULD BE HORRIFYING BEYOND DESCRIPTION-- IS INSTEAD DEEPLY GRATIFYING.
ALMOST AS MUCH AS THE DEATHLY SILENCE THAT FOLLOWS.
STRUGGLING TO MAINTAIN CONSCIOUSNESS, HOLLAND FREES GRASP AND KRIPPTMANN OF THEIR STASIS. BUT BEFORE HE CAN REACH THEM,.
YOU WOULD HAVE ME THINK MYSELF CORRUPT AND VAINGLORIOUS--
--A TRAITOR TO BOTH MY OATH AND MY RACE.
BUT IF I CAN TAKE NO PRIDE IN MY LIFE...
AAAAGGGHHH
...I CAN SALVAGE MY SELF-RESPECT FROM YOUR DEATH!
FINALLY.. IT'S OVER REALLY OVER..
THEY HAVE ONLY SUBLIMINALLY NOTICED THE "FORTRESS" CHANGING AROUND THEM

[CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING]


UNTIL, SEVERAL MINUTES LATER, WHERE THEY HAVE BEEN BECOMES CLEAR:
THE "FORTRESS"-- IT WAS NOTHING BUT A TELEPATHICALLY-INDUCED ILLUSION!
NO WONDER NO ONE IN THE SURROUNDING TOWN REACTED TO SUCH A STRANGE STRUCTURE IN THEIR MIDST!
IT TAKES ANOTHER HOUR TO FIND THE WRECKAGE OF THE CAR THEY HAD LEFT *, AND PULL THEIR REMAINING COMRADE FROM IT:
THEY SAY PAUL MAY BE IN A LOCAL HOSPITAL FOR A FEW WEEKS, BUT HE SHOULD PULL THROUGH. WHAT ABOUT ALEC?
HARD TO SAY. IF THE ANTIBIOTICS WORK, HE MAY HAVE A CHANCE.
* LAST ISSUE -- LEN.
BUT HOLLAND FINDS THE STRENGTH FOR ONE FINAL GESTURE TO CLOSE THIS CHAPTER OF HIS LIFE
THERE...! NOW THERE'S...NOTHING TO REMIND ME.. THIS WHOLE NIGHTMARE...EVER HAPPENED..!
WE HAVE TO GET HIM BACK TO THE SWAMP BEFORE WE CAN EVEN THINK OF OUR OWN PROBLEMS.
JA. LIKE YOU, I'VE NOWHERE LEFT TO GO...
WILL YOU COME WITH US, DR. KRIPPTMANN?
BUT THEY CANNOT KNOW THE DEPTH OF THOSE PROBLEMS
THEY CANNOT SEE THE SCENE NOW TRANSPIRING AT SUNDERLAND CORP. HEADQUARTERS IN WASHINGTON:
MS. HAMMOND, GET ME DWIGHT WICKER IN THE JUSTICE DEPARTMENT-- CODE RED.
WE'VE GOT TO STEP UP OUR EFFORTS TO KILL HOLLAND..
COMMUNICATIONS LOG UPDATE...FILE-TITLE: ELLENBECK, WALTER-C.O.D. CODE "GRASP"; FILE-CODE: 666
DISPATCHED FROM: MUNICH BUREAU... DATE: 2-31 TIME: 12:69
OPERATIVE "GRASP" BELIEVED DEAD, KILLED IN ACCIDENT... AS-YET-UNEXPLAINED PHENOMENON. DETAILS TO FOLLOW PENDING INVESTIGATION. STOP
THE TREK TO LOUISIANA IS TWO WEEKS OF COVERT BACKROAD TRAVEL -- SOMETHING AT WHICH THIS GROUP IS NOW MOST EXPERIENCED.
THE GRADUALLY-STRENGTHENING SWAMP THING HELPS LOCATE THE AREA AS BEST HE CAN.
HE'S BEEN IMMERSED FOR DAYS IS IT WORKING?
I THINK SO. THE DISTORTION IS BEGINNING TO ABATE.
ASSUMING ALEC'S ALL RIGHT, DENNIS.. WHERE TO NOW?
GOOD QUESTION, LIZ THERE'S SO MUCH LEFT... UNRESOLVED...!
GRASP MAY BE GONE BUT SUNDERLAND WILL SEND OTHERS..AFTER US...!
YES.. "WHERE TO NOW," INDEED..!
NEXT SWAMPY AND THE PHANTOM STRANGER IN A FULL-LENGTH SHOCKER!

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The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
ALL NEW!
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THE FACE OF THE EARTH HAS MANY EXPRESSIONS--ALL OF THEM IMMUTABLE!
. . THE MURKY SWAMP DOES NOT GIVE WAY TO THE CLEAR LIGHT OF DAY. . .
..NOR WILL THE DESERT PUT FORTH THE BLOSSOMS OF SPRING
YET MAN HAS TRIED TO FOOL UNBLINKING NATURE WITH SCIENTIFIC SLEIGHT OF HAND--ASKING THE DESERTS TO BLOSSOM, OR THE EARTH TO KEEP STEP WITH HIS OWN FRANTIC PACE! .
BUT EARTH ABIDES, AND WATCHES IMPASSIVELY AS MAN'S FOLLY TAKES HIM ON THE ROAD TO RUIN.
MEN CALL ME THE PHANTOM STRANGER . AND I HAVE BEEN THE COMPANION OF MANY WHO HAVE TRAVELED THAT ROAD.
CRYSTAL VISIONS, SHATTERED DREAMS!

© DAN MISKIN . BO & SCOTT HAMPTON LEN WEIN [illegible]

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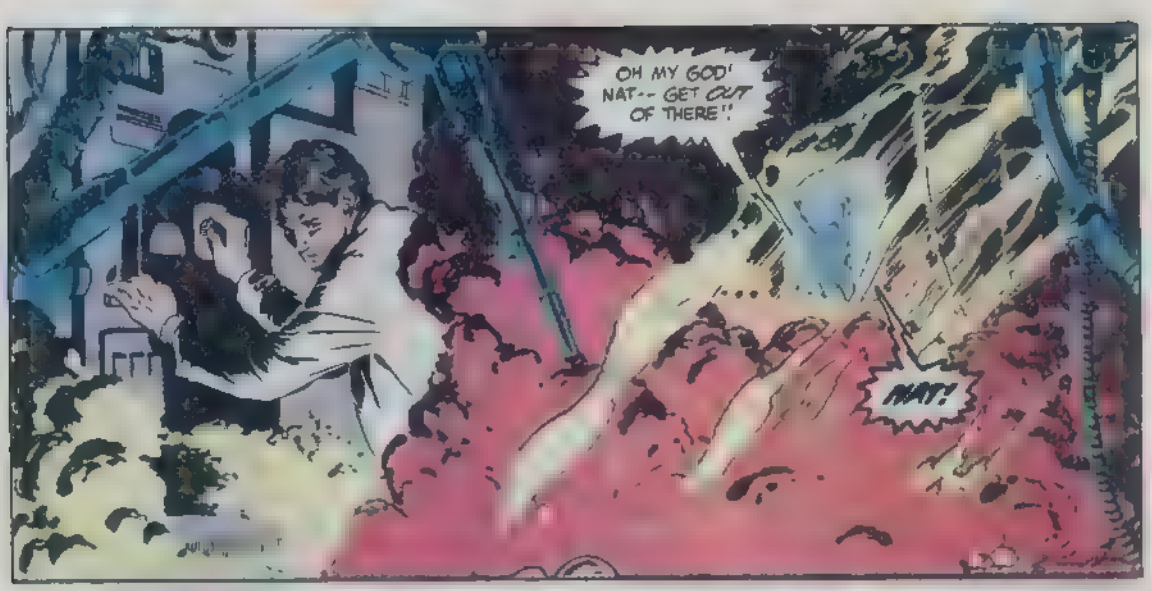
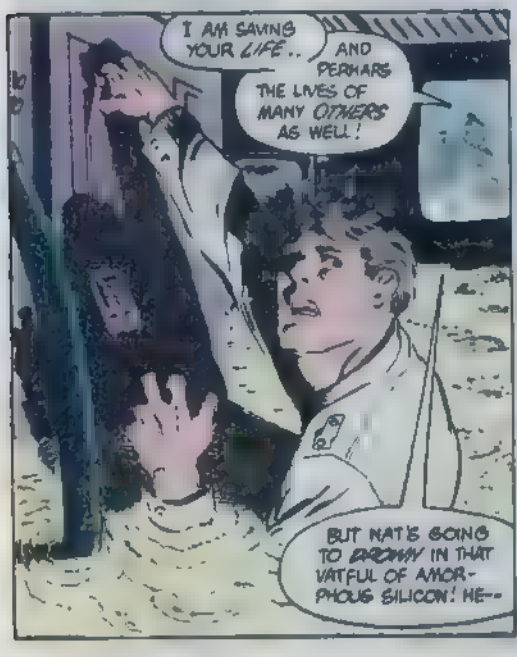
BRODER ELECTRONICS HAS BEEN IN BUSINESS FOR FIVE YEARS..
..AND IN THAT TIME, THIRTY ONE YEAR OLD NATHANIEL BRODER HAS BECOME A MILLIONAIRE THANKS TO HIS ROLE IN ADVANCING SILICON CHIP TECHNOLOGY
SOME YOUNG MEN IN HIS POSITION WOULD CHOOSE TO RETIRE WITH THEIR RICHES..
BUT FOR A MAN LIKE NAT BRODER THERE IS ALWAYS ONE MORE CHALLENGE
HERE WE GO, SALLY— IF THIS WORKS, WE'RE GOING TO TAKE THE INDUSTRY BY STORM!
WISH ME LUCK.
GOOD LUCK BUT I STILL DON'T SEE WHY YOU HAVE TO BE IN THERE TO WATCH, EVEN IF IT IS YOUR PET PROJECT!
WE DON'T KNOW WHAT MIGHT GO WRONG WHEN WE DESTABILIZE THE EMERGING CRYSTALLINE STRUCTURES!
I'VE WORKED IT ALL OUT ON PAPER, HON, AND IT SHOULDN'T BE A PROBLEM
ANYWAY, YOU'VE GOT TO TAKE A FEW RISKS IF YOU WANT TO--
HOLY--!
NAT BRODER HAS MADE HIMSELF A MEGALITHY MAN BY TAKING RISKS..
BUT IT APPEARS HE MAY HAVE JUST TAKEN HIS LAST!
2


OH MY GOD! NAT-- GET OUT OF THERE!!
NAT!

HE'S NOT COMING OUT! HE'S TRYING TO STOP THE PROCESS
LABORAT
BUT IF HE STAYS IN THERE, HE COULD BE KILLED! I'VE GOT TO--

WHAT--?!
NO, SALLY BRODER-- YOU CAN DO NOTHING!

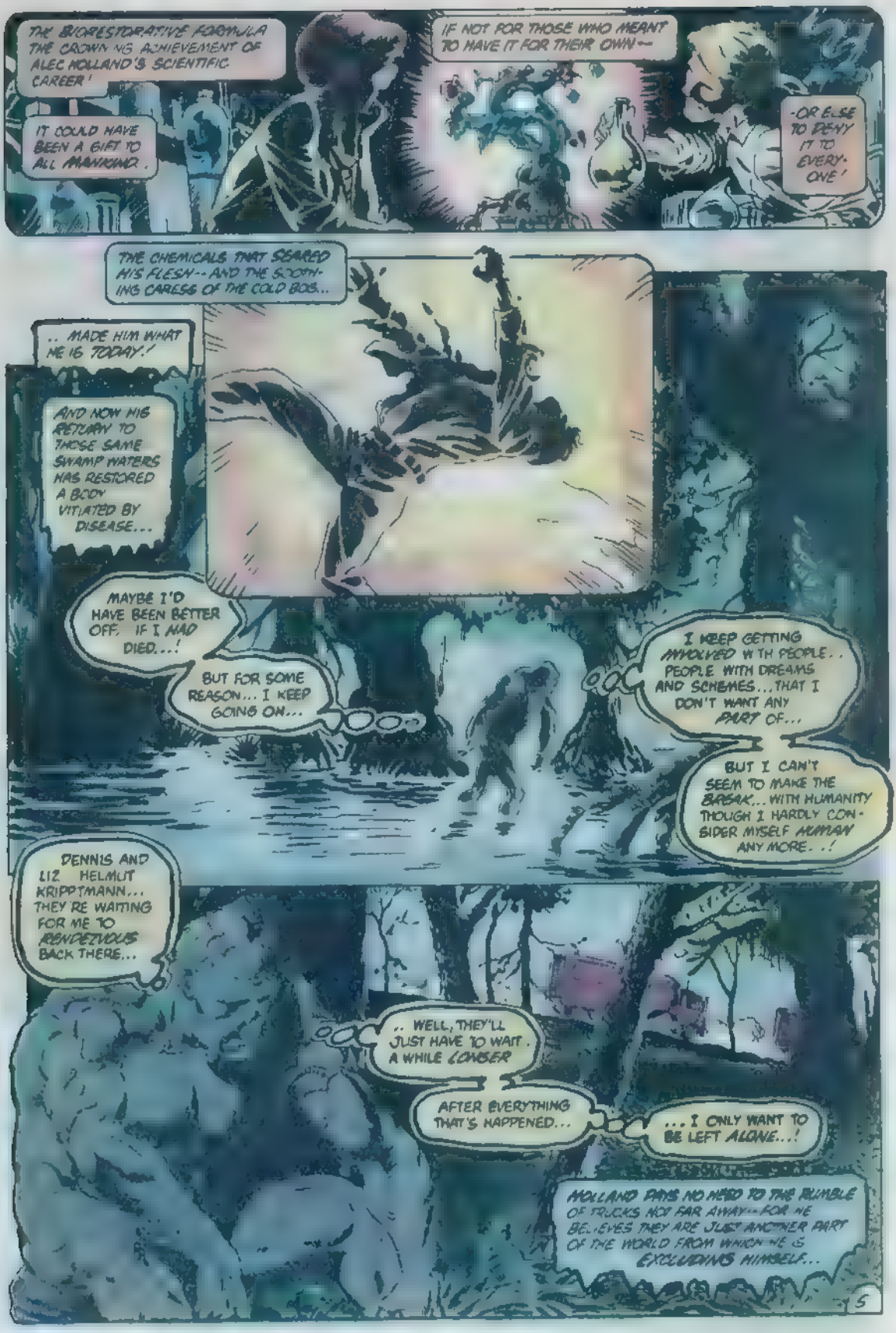
LET GO OF ME! DON'T YOU REALIZE WHAT YOU'RE DOING?


I AM SAVING YOUR LIFE.. AND PERHAPS THE LIVES OF MANY OTHERS AS WELL!
BUT NAT'S GOING TO DROWN IN THAT VATFUL OF AMORPHOUS SILICON! HE--

THAT SUBSTANCE HAS BECOME MORE HAZARDOUS THAN YOU YET RECOGNIZE--
--ALTHOUGH YOUR [illegible] IS BECOMING AWARE OF ITS PERIL...

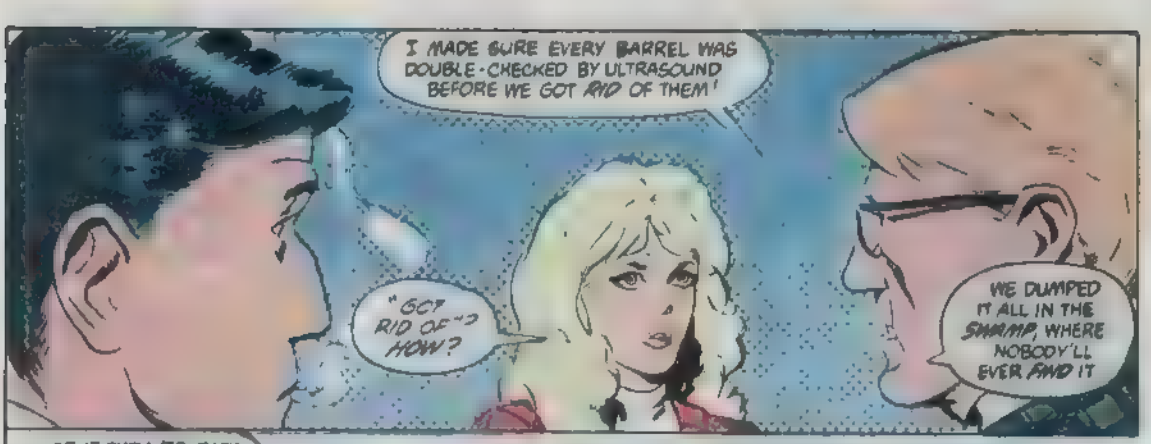
LAB SEAL
NO ENTRY
--AND HAS TAKEN STEPS TO ENSURE THAT NO ONE ELSE CAN BE HARMED BY IT!
NO! HE LOCKED HIMSELF IN! BUT WHY..?
3

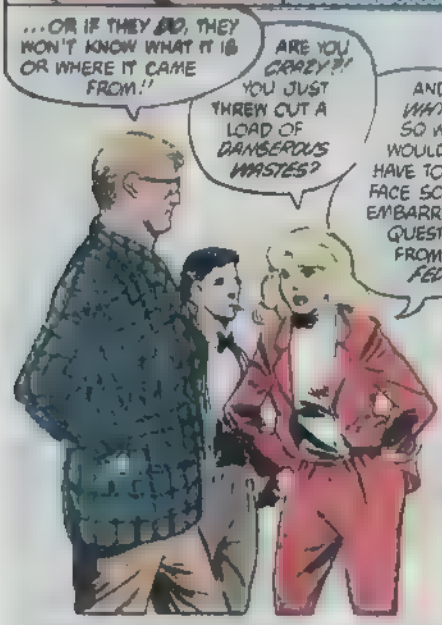
THE SILICON-- IT'S EXPANDING.. FILLING UP THE LABORATORY! WHEN HE SAW WHAT WAS HAPPENING--
--HE SACRIFICED HIMSELF TO CONTAIN THE DANGER!
BUT HOW DID YOU KNOW THAT IT--?
H-HE'S GONE--!
AND I DON'T EVEN KNOW WHO HE WAS-- OR WHERE HE CAME FROM!
SCIENCE GONE AWRY.
..A CREATURE WHO WAS ONCE A MAN DR ALEC HOLLAND, BUT WHO IS NOW SOMETHING QUITE DIFFERENT.
...A SWAMP THING
LOST TRACK OF TIME
I WONDER HOW LONG I'VE BEEN VEGETATING DOWN HERE
...AND IF DENNIS'S THEORY IS REALLY CORRECT.
YES!!
THE WATERS HAVE REGENERATED.. MY RAVAGED BODY.
BECAUSE THIS SWAMP IS STILL SUFFUSED WITH THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA.
4

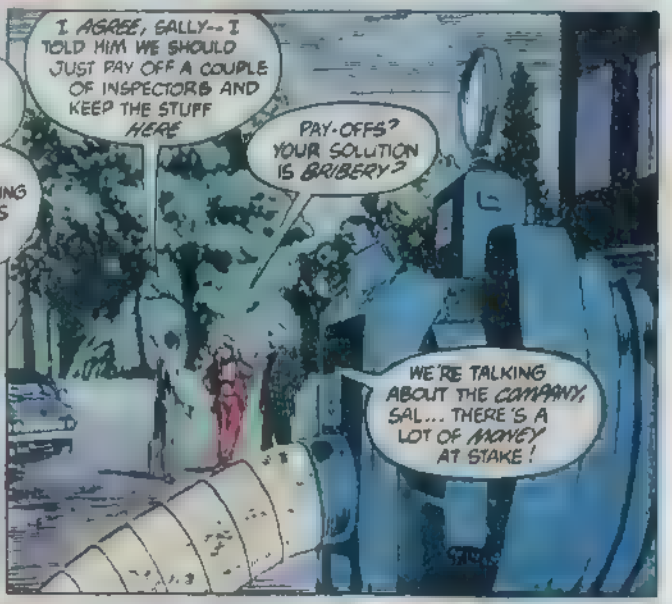

THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA THE CROWNING ACHIEVEMENT OF ALEC HOLLAND'S SCIENTIFIC CAREER!
IT COULD HAVE BEEN A GIFT TO ALL MANKIND.
IF NOT FOR THOSE WHO MEANT TO HAVE IT FOR THEIR OWN---
-OR ELSE TO DENY IT TO EVERY-ONE!
THE CHEMICALS THAT SEARED HIS FLESH--AND THE SOOTHING CARESS OF THE COLD BOG...
.. MADE HIM WHAT HE IS TODAY!
AND NOW HIS RETURN TO THOSE SAME SWAMP WATERS HAS RESTORED A BODY VITIATED BY DISEASE...
MAYBE I'D HAVE BEEN BETTER OFF, IF I HAD DIED...!
BUT FOR SOME REASON... I KEEP GOING ON...
I KEEP GETTING INVOLVED WITH PEOPLE.. PEOPLE WITH DREAMS AND SCHEMES...THAT I DON'T WANT ANY PART OF...
BUT I CAN'T SEEM TO MAKE THE BARSAK... WITH HUMANITY THOUGH I HARDLY CONSIDER MYSELF HUMAN ANY MORE..!
DENNIS AND LIZ HELMUT KRIPPTMANN... THEY'RE WAITING FOR ME TO RENDEZVOUS BACK THERE...
.. WELL, THEY'LL JUST HAVE TO WAIT A WHILE LONGER
AFTER EVERYTHING THAT'S HAPPENED...
... I ONLY WANT TO BE LEFT ALONE...!
HOLLAND PAYS NO HEED TO THE RUMBLE OF TRUCKS NOT FAR AWAY--FOR HE BELIEVES THEY ARE JUST ANOTHER PART OF THE WORLD FROM WHICH HE IS EXCLUDING HIMSELF...

. AND THUS THEY HAVE NOTHING TO DO WITH HIM--
HOW ABOUT THAT TURN-OFF UP AHEAD, SID?
YEAH, IT LOOKS PRETTY SECLUDED
.. SIGNAL THE OTHER GUYS
LET'S MOVE YOU TWO!
WE WANT TO BE IN AND OUT BEFORE ANYONE KNOWS WE'VE BEEN HERE!
GEEZ I DON'T KNOW, SID--
--IT DOESN'T SEEM LIKE WE'RE DOING THE RIGHT THING
LISTEN-- WHATEVER THE BOSS TELLS ME TO DO, THAT'S THE RIGHT THING!
THEY SAY TO DUMP THIS JUNK THAT KILLED BROOKER I DUMP IT! GOT ME?
YEAH - SURE
AND IT'S ALL SEALED UP TIGHT--
IT'S NOT LIKE IT'S GONNA HURT ANYBODY, RIGHT?
RIGHT
I'LL TELL YOU SOMETHING, JIMMY--
--YOU'LL BE A LOT BETTER OFF
--IF YOU DO YOUR JOB DON'T ASK QUESTIONS--
--AND JUST BE GLAD THIS IS ALMOST THE END OF IT!
THE BARRELS FILLED WITH SILICON WASTE BOB, THEN SINK INTO THE MUCK AND MIRE
DANG
6

AND THE MEN WHO HAVE DONE THEIR JOB HASTILY DEPART.
LITTLE REALIZING THAT THE CONSEQUENCES OF THEIR ACTIONS
..ARE FAR FROM OVER..!
AND WHILE THE BURDEN OF RESPONSIBILITY FOR THOSE ACTIONS WEIGHS HEAVY ON ALL CONCERNED.. IS GREATEST SHARE MUST REST ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE PEOPLE AT THE TOP.
SALLY, YOU SHOULDN'T BE HERE.
BRODER ELECTRON
I HAD TO COME, GEORGE.. TO SEE
THAT IS.. DID THEY FIND NAT'S BODY YET?
I'M SORRY, KID.. WE'VE JUST ABOUT FINISHED THE CLEAN-UP. BUT THERE'S NO TRACE OF HIM
GOD, IT MUST HAVE BEEN HORRIBLE!


I MADE SURE EVERY BARREL WAS DOUBLE-CHECKED BY ULTRASOUND BEFORE WE GOT RID OF THEM!
"GOT RID OF"? HOW?
WE DUMPED IT ALL IN THE SWAMP, WHERE NOBODY'LL EVER FIND IT


...OR IF THEY DID, THEY WON'T KNOW WHAT IT IS OR WHERE IT CAME FROM!!
ARE YOU CRAZY?! YOU JUST THREW OUT A LOAD OF DANGEROUS WASTES?
AND WHY? SO WE WOULDN'T HAVE TO FACE SOME EMBARRASSING QUESTIONS FROM THE FEDS?


I AGREE, SALLY-- I TOLD HIM WE SHOULD JUST PAY OFF A COUPLE OF INSPECTORS AND KEEP THE STUFF HERE
PAY-OFFS? YOUR SOLUTION IS BRIBERY?
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT THE COMPANY, SAL... THERE'S A LOT OF MONEY AT STAKE!

AND WHILE SALLY BRODER TAKES UP THE REINS OF COMMAND WITH ALL THE SPIRIT SHE CAN MUSTER...

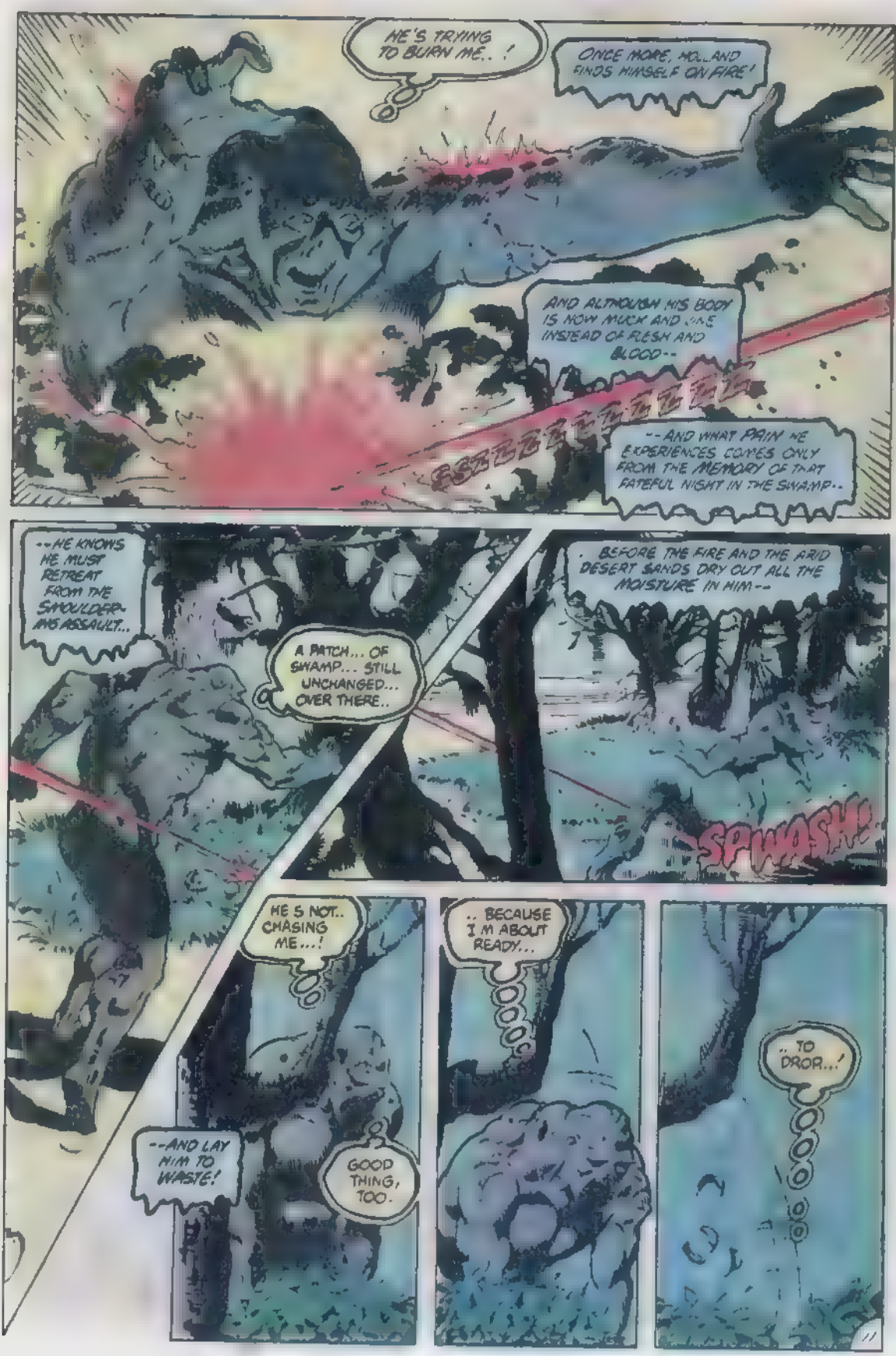
ALEC HOLLAND WISHES THAT HIS SPIRIT COULD SOAR FREE FROM THE MEMORIES THAT NEVER GO AWAY.
HE TRIES TO PUT FROM HIS MIND THE TERRIBLE EVENTS THAT HAVE SWEPT HIM UP IN RECENT WEEKS...

8

CONTINUED ON 2ND PAGE FOLLOWING

AND THAT ALLIGATOR.'
'T S BEEN TURNED TO CRYSTAL
WHAT IN THE WORLD COULD BE CAUSING...
SHREEEE
WHATEVER IT IS, IT S NEARBY.'
JUST THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS DUNE
AND AS MOSSY LEGS SCALE THE SANDY SLOPE..
SOMETHING ELSE CLIMBING UP HERE.. IT'S
WHAT IN HEAVEN'S NAME. IT S SOME KIND OF.. CRYSTAL CREATURE
AND IT SURE DOESN T LOOK VERY FRIENDLY..'
APPARENTLY IT CAN CRYSTALLIZE ANIMALS WITH A TOUCH..

I'D BETTER BACK OFF AND MAKE SURE HE DOESN'T TOUCH
ME...?
NOTHING...! HIS TOUCH DIDN'T HAVE ANY EFFECT...!
BUT THAT'S JUST MADE HIM MADDER
AND THIS GUY'S STRONG.. MAYBE AS STRONG AS I AM...!
STILL I'VE GOT GRAVITY ON MY SIDE
ALL I HAVE TO DO IS SHIFT MY WEIGHT...
.. AND DIAMOND-HEAD AND I BOTH GO TUMBLING DOWN...!
BROKE FREE
BUT I DON'T THINK... THAT'S GOING TO STOP HIM
ACTUALLY I DON'T EVEN KNOW.. IF HE'S A "MAN" OR AN "IT".
I GUESS THAT PEOPLE HAVE THE SAME PROBLEM WITH ME..
BUT WE CAN COMPARE NOTES AFTER I GET HIM OFF MY CASE...!
RIGHT NOW HE'S UP TO SOMETHING
HIS HAND.. STARTING TO GLOW.. IT'S FOCUSING SUNLIGHT... LIKE A LENS.


HE'S TRYING TO BURN ME..!
ONCE MORE, HOLLAND FINDS HIMSELF ON FIRE!
AND ALTHOUGH HIS BODY IS NOW MUCK AND VINE INSTEAD OF FLESH AND BLOOD--
--AND WHAT PAIN HE EXPERIENCES COMES ONLY FROM THE MEMORY OF THAT FATEFUL NIGHT IN THE SWAMP..
--HE KNOWS HE MUST RETREAT FROM THE SHOULDER-ING ASSAULT...
A PATCH... OF SWAMP... STILL UNCHANGED... OVER THERE..
.. BEFORE THE FIRE AND THE ARID DESERT SANDS DRY OUT ALL THE MOISTURE IN HIM--
SPWASH!
HE'S NOT.. CHASING ME...!
--AND LAY HIM TO WASTE!
GOOD THING, TOO.
.. BECAUSE I'M ABOUT READY...
.. TO DROP...!

THE SWAMP THING LIES UNMOVING IN THE NURTURING, LIFE SUSTAINING WATERS
EVEN AS THOSE WATERS SEEM TO EVAPORATE INTO NOTHINGNESS...
...BEFORE THE ENCROACHMENT OF AN ALIEN AND MISPLACED TERRAIN
AND NOT LONG AFTER
I TOLD YOU, SID-- I TOLD YOU I DIDN'T LIKE THIS!
SALLY-- GEORGE-- THIS IS SIMPLY INCREDIBLE..
SHUT UP, JIMMY! JUST KEEP A LID ON IT, WILL YOU?
THE SWAMP'S BEEN TURNED INTO A VERITABLE SAHARA!
FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE PETER, YOU MAKE IT SOUND LIKE THIS IS SOME WONDERFUL NEW DISCOVERY!
WELL, I ISN'T, YOU KNOW, IT'S A DISASTER!
NAT'S METHOD OF ACCELERATING THE GROWTH OF SILICON CRYSTALS WAS MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN HE COULD HAVE EVER EXPECTED...
--SO SUCCESSFUL IN FACT THAT THE PROCESS DOESN'T SEEM TO WANT TO STOP!
I'M GLAD I INSISTED WE COME DOWN HERE...
MAYBE WE CAN FIND A WAY TO REVERSE THE DAMAGE.
BUT IT'S NO WONDER THE MAN IN THE CAPE STOPPED ME FROM GOING INTO THE LAB!
GEORGE WILLISTON AND PETER MURDOCK WONDER AT THE MEANINGS OF SALLY'S WORDS...
12

BUT THEIR QUERIES ARE CUT SHORT BEFORE THEY ARE EVEN BEGUN, AS -
DR BRODER! MS WILLISTON LOOK--THERE'S SOMETHING GOING ON UNDER THERE!
1935
HOLY HANNAH! WHAT THE DEVIL IS THAT?
SEEZ, IT MUST BE THAT SWAMP-MAN YOU HEAR PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT
MY FAME PRECEDES ME ONCE AGA'N.
TAKE IT EASY FOLKS.. I DON'T WANT TO HURT ANYBODY JUST.
HE'S GOT ME HALLLP!
KEEP AWAY YOU-- YOU WHAT-EVER YOU ARE!
BUT I'M HERE TO TELL YA.
I AM SICK AND TIRED OF BEING USED FOR TARGET PRACTICE
CRIPES THE BULLETS WENT RIGHT THRU HIM!
FRIEND YOU PROBABLY THINK YOU'RE JUST DOING YOUR JOB
HELLLP!
...BY EVERY RED-BLOODED...REDNECKED IDIOT...WHO KNOWS HOW TO FIRE A GUN..
3

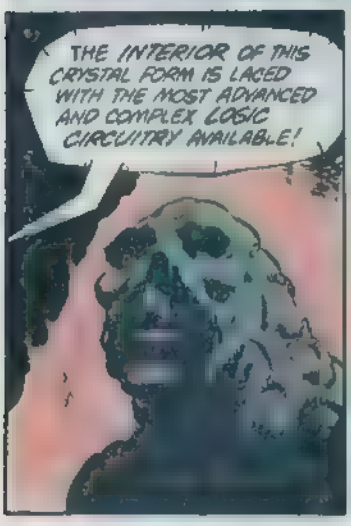
JIMMY! COME ON, NOW'S YOUR CHANCE!
I--I DON'T KNOW IF I CAN DO IT..!
IT'S CHANGING BACK INTO SWAMP!
CONSIDER YOURSELF LUCKY THAT I'M NOT THE MONSTER.. YOU THINK I AM
IF I WAS THEY'D HAVE TO TAKE YOU HOME IN A..
AGHH! THE SANDS GIVING WAY BENEATH ME
THIS IS WAY OUT OF MY LEAGUE, PETE! WHAT THE DEVIL'S GOING ON HERE?
I'M NOT SURE, GEORGE-- BUT IT SEEMS AS THOUGH THE EXPERIMENTAL SILICON IS HAVING A KIND OF TUG OF WAR WITH THE SWAMP OVER WHICH WILL PRE-DOMINATE!
CALM DOWN FELLA
I'M NOT GOING TO DO ANYTHING EXCEPT SEND YOU BACK TO YOUR FRIENDS.
NOT JUST THE SWAMP
THE BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA IS RESISTING THE TRANSFORMATION INTO DESERT
THAT COULD BE WHAT KEPT ME FROM BEING TURNED INTO CRYSTAL..
BUT WHAT ABOUT THAT THING?
IT LOOKED TO ME LIKE IT WAS TRYING TO HELP THE GUARD WHEN THEY FELL!

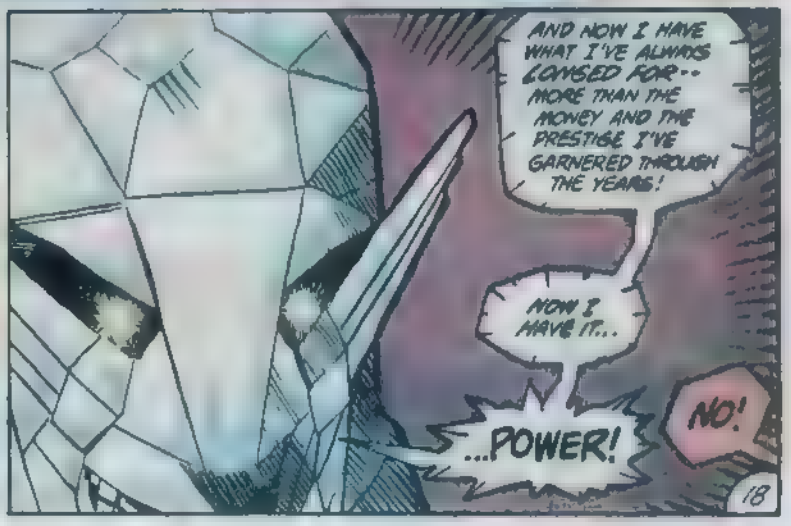
IF IT DOESN'T MEAN TO HARM US AND DOESN'T INTERFERE
. . I THINK WE SHOULD DO WHAT WE CAME HERE TO DO--
--FIGURE OUT HOW TO CLEAN UP THIS MESS
AND MAYBE FIND SOME TRACE OF HAT'S BODY!
WAIT A SECOND.
COULD IT BE THAT THIS GUY THEY'RE TALKING ABOUT, IS THIS CRYSTAL MAN I FOUGHT..?
HE MIGHT'VE BEEN... ALTERED BY HIS EXPERIMENTAL SUBSTANCE.. . JUST AS I WAS BY, MINE....
I'D BETTER TELL THEM THAT..
YOU HAVE DISCOVERED THE TRUTH, ALEC HOLLAND--
BUT ONLY PART OF IT
WHO?
NO, DO NOT SPEAK. I KNOW THAT IT IS DIFFICULT FOR YOU.
...EVEN AS I KNOW YOUR QUESTIONS.. I AM BUT A STRANGER.
AND ALTHOUGH I COULD PROVIDE YOU WITH THE OTHER ANSWER YOU SEEK, I WILL NOT.
FOR YOU WOULD NOT [redacted] TRUTH ABOUT NATHANIEL BRODER EVEN IF I TOLD YOU.
YOU WILL SEE IT EVENTUALLY, AS WILL HIS WIFE-- AND I PRAY THAT REVELATION WILL NOT COME TOO LATE!
EEYAAAAK!
A SCREAM.../ IT MUST BE... THE WOMAN WHO WAS HERE..
AND UNLESS I MISS MY GUESS-- SHE JUST FOUND HER HUSBAND.!
ALL RIGHT, STRANGER, LET'S...
WHAT..?
HE'S DISAPPEARED!

AND NEARBY...
NO GOOD! BULLETS AREN'T BOTHERING THIS ONE EITHER--!
BLAM! BLAM!
I DON'T KNOW WHAT WE'VE STUMBLED ONTO HERE, FRIENDS-- BUT I'M ALL FOR GETTING OUT AND PLACING AN ANONYMOUS CALL...
...TO THE NATIONAL GUARD!
HEY, IT'S ONLY MADE OF GLASS, MR WILLISTON-- THERE'S GOT TO BE A WAY TO BREAK IT!
YOU KNOW WHAT THEY SAY! THE BIGGER THEY COME--
THE HARDER THEY F--
-AARCH!
SPWHSH!

NO--! NO-- DIDN'T MEAN--
GOOD GOD, IT TALKS!
NO-- WHAT AM I--
I THINK IT'S TRYING TO ESCAPE--! WHAT SHOULD WE DO?
AS FAR AS I'M CONCERNED, PETER MY BOY--
IF IT WANTS TO GO...
WE LET IT...
THERE HE IS.. RUNNING ALMOST LIKE... HE'S SCARED...
I KNOW HOW HE MUST FEEL...
--TRAPPED IN AN INHUMAN BODY..! HE NEEDS HELP...
BRODER...!
IT'S OKAY WAIT RO.. HELP
YES-- HELP--! I WAS-- CONFUSED--!
I COULDN'T REMEMBER-- WHO I WAS-- IT WAS SO DIFFICULT-- EVEN TO THINK--
JUST LIKE ME.. I KNOW EXACTLY WHAT HE'S TALKING ABOUT
IT TOOK SOME ADJUSTING-- TO GET USED TO THIS NEW FORM OF MENTALITY--
BUT WHEN YOU CALLED OUT MY NAME, IT ALL FELL INTO PLACE!
OVER THE COURSE OF MERE MOMENTS, NATHANIEL BRODER'S VOICE GROWS CLEARER AND MORE SURE.
7

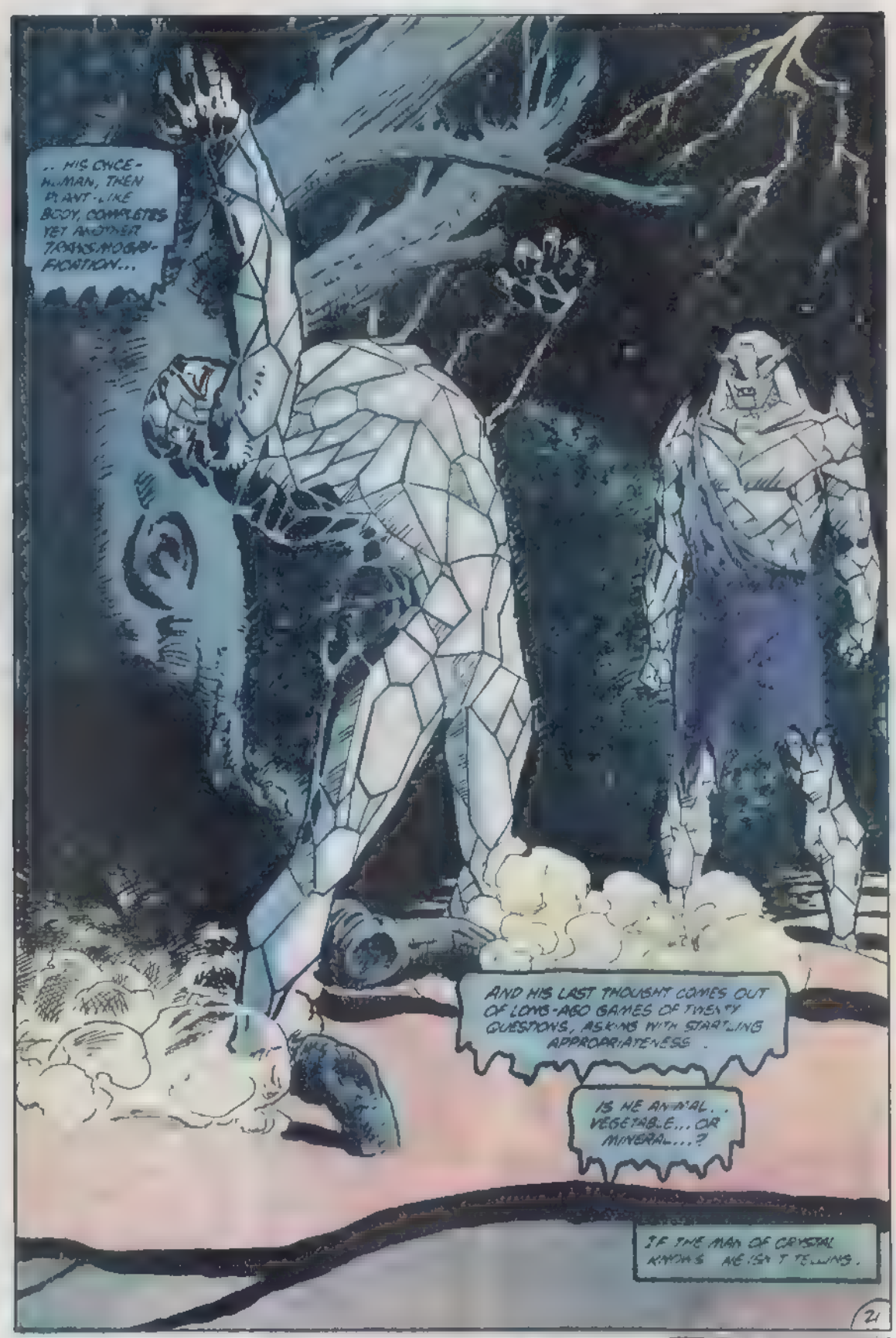
AND AS HE LISTENS, ALEC HOLLAND KNOWS THAT IF HE STILL HAD BLOOD... IT WOULD RUN COLD...
SOMETHING'S .. NOT RIGHT HERE...! SOMETHING IN HIS TONE...
I'M IN CONTROL AGAIN NOW! I UNDERSTAND WHAT HAPPENED TO ME...
SILICON... CRYSTALS..
YES, I PLANNED TO GROW THEM MORE RAPIDLY THAN HAD EVER BEEN DONE BEFORE!
BUT I WAS ALSO ATTEMPTING TO LAY IN MICRO-CIRCUITRY AS THE CRYSTALS GREW-- IN ORDER TO AVOID THE TIME AND COST OF ETCHING THE FINAL SILICON CHIPS!
SO YOU SEE WHAT'S BECOME OF ME...


THE INTERIOR OF THIS CRYSTAL FORM IS LACED WITH THE MOST ADVANCED AND COMPLEX COSIC CIRCUITRY AVAILABLE!

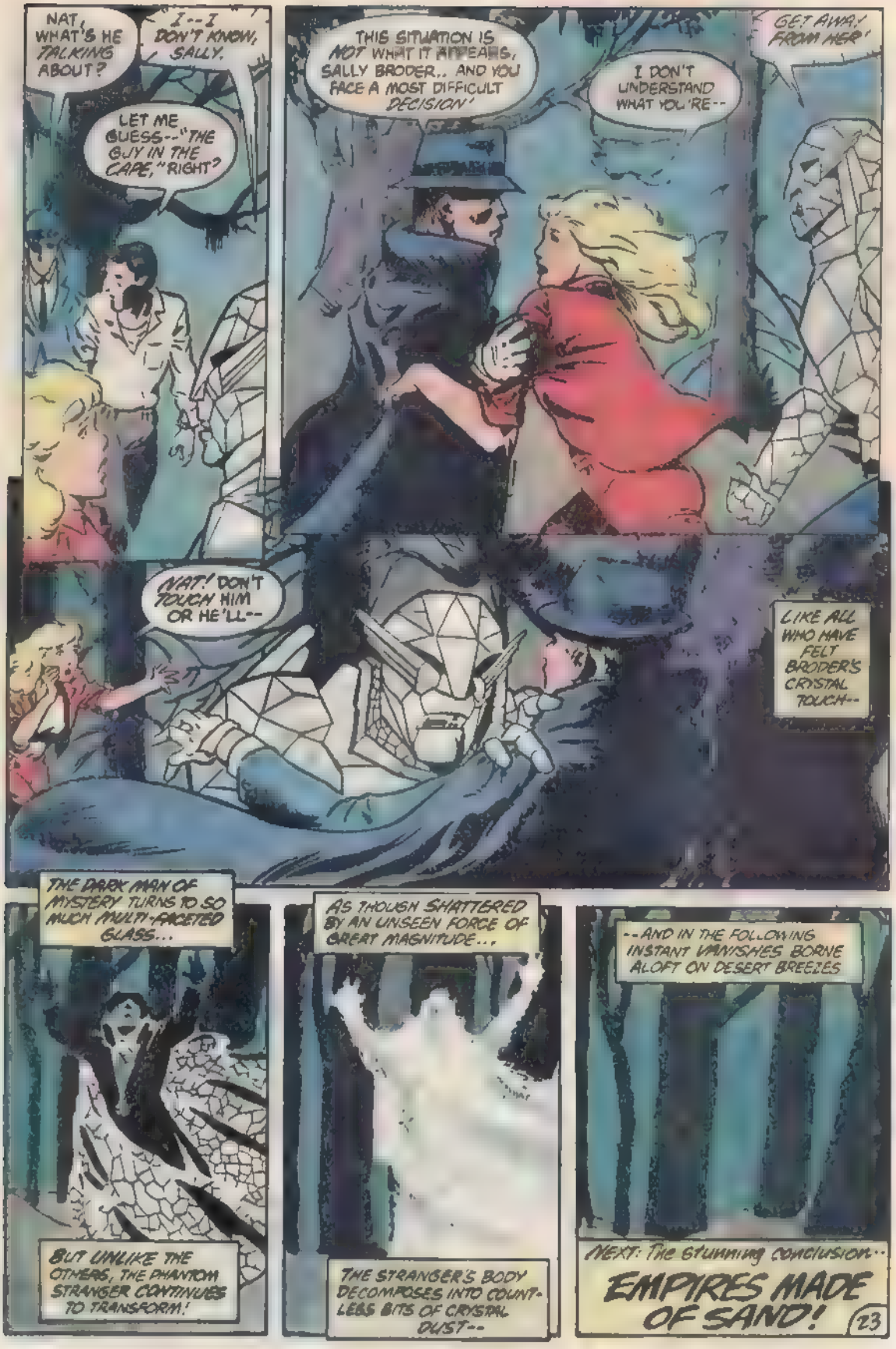

AND NOW I HAVE WHAT I'VE ALWAYS LONGED FOR-- MORE THAN THE MONEY AND THE PRESTIGE I'VE GARNERED THROUGH THE YEARS!
NOW I HAVE IT...
...POWER!
NO!

OH YES, MY MOSSY FRIEND.. I'M A LIVING COMPUTER NOW..
WITH VAST PHYSICAL STRENGTH IN THE PACKAGE'
ADD TO THAT MY FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND NOTHING CAN STOP ME...
CERTAINLY NOT YOU!
HE'S DRUNK WITH POWER...AND HE'S NOT GOING TO LET ANYTHING STAND IN HIS WAY.'
ZZZOTTT
THIS IS WHAT THAT STRANGER WOULDN'T TELL ME THAT BRODER WOULD BECOME A MENACE
AND HE WAS RIGHT TO THINK... THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE BELIEVED HIM BECAUSE I IDENTIFIED TOO MUCH WITH BRODER'S CONDITION'
NOW I'VE GOT TO TRY TO STOP HIM.. IF I STILL CAN...
EVEN IF I HAVE TO RISK BEING BURNED TO A CRISP...!
WHAT ARE YOU MADE OF..?
DON'T YOU EVEN FEEL ANY PAIN?!
NOT ANY MORE NOT SINCE I BECAME A THING
INSTEAD OF A MAN.'
19

I DON'T KNOW WHO.
...OR WHAT YOU ARE...OR WHY YOU EVEN CARE TO FIGHT ME--
BUT IT'S A FUTILE EFFORT! THIS IS MY DREAM-- MY DESTINY!
LORD PRESERVE US FROM DREAMS LIKE YOURS MADMAN!
WE GRAPPLED LIKE THIS BEFORE, DIDN'T WE-- WHEN I WAS S"--SO CONFUSED.
AND SOMETHING IN YOUR BIZARRE PHYSIOLOGY PREVENTED ME FROM TURNING YOU TO CRYSTAL THEN
BUT NOW I'M IN FULL CONTROL OF MY POWER...
THOK!
AND WHATEVER IS RESISTING THE CHANGE..
.. WILL NOT RESIST.
OH GOD... NO...!
.. FOR LONG:
HOLLAND WANTS TO SCREAM. BUT BEFORE HE CAN EMIT EVEN THE FAINTEST RASP...


.. HIS ONCE-HUMAN, THEN PLANT-LIKE BODY, COMPLETES YET ANOTHER TRANSMOGRIFICATION...
AND HIS LAST THOUGHT COMES OUT OF LONG-AGO GAMES OF TWENTY QUESTIONS, ASKING WITH STARTLING APPROPRIATENESS.
IS HE ANIMAL, VEGETABLE... OR MINERAL...?
IF THE MAN OF CRYSTAL KNOWS, HE ISN'T TELLING.

NAT . NAT, IS IT--
YES, SALLY-- IT'S ME
WHEN--WHEN I HEARD YOU SPEAK BACK THERE...YOUR VOICE WAS DIFFERENT, BUT I--
I WAS JUST STARTING TO REGAIN MY FACULTIES--GET CONTROL OF MYSELF AGAIN-- WHEN THE CREATURE ATTACKED ME
MY POOR DARLING, IT--
OH NAT-- WHAT'S HAPPENING?
NO! DON'T TOUCH ME, SAL.. IT COULD HAVE RATHER UNPLEASANT CONSEQUENCES!
I THINK WE SHOULD GET BACK TO THE VAN...
MAYBE I CAN UNDO THE DAMAGE THAT I DID THERE
ON THE CONTRARY, NATHANIEL BRODER
IT APPEARS THERE IS NO END TO THE DAMAGE YOU ARE PREPARED TO DO!
WHAT!?
YOU AGAIN! BUT..
22


NAT, WHAT'S HE TALKING ABOUT?
I--I DON'T KNOW, SALLY.
LET ME GUESS--"THE GUY IN THE CAPE," RIGHT?
THIS SITUATION IS NOT WHAT IT APPEARS, SALLY BRODER.. AND YOU FACE A MOST DIFFICULT DECISION!
I DON'T UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE--
GET AWAY FROM HER!
NAT! DON'T TOUCH HIM OR HE'LL--
LIKE ALL WHO HAVE FELT BRODER'S CRYSTAL TOUCH--
THE DARK MAN OF MYSTERY TURNS TO SO MUCH MULTI-FACETED GLASS...
BUT UNLIKE THE OTHERS, THE PHANTOM STRANGER CONTINUES TO TRANSFORM!
AS THOUGH SHATTERED BY AN UNSEEN FORCE OF GREAT MAGNITUDE...
THE STRANGER'S BODY DECOMPOSES INTO COUNTLESS BITS OF CRYSTAL DUST--
--AND IN THE FOLLOWING INSTANT VANISHES BORNE ALOFT ON DESERT BREEZES
NEXT: The stunning conclusion...
EMPIRES MADE OF SAND!
23

DC
THE SAGA OF THE
SWAMP THING
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO 15
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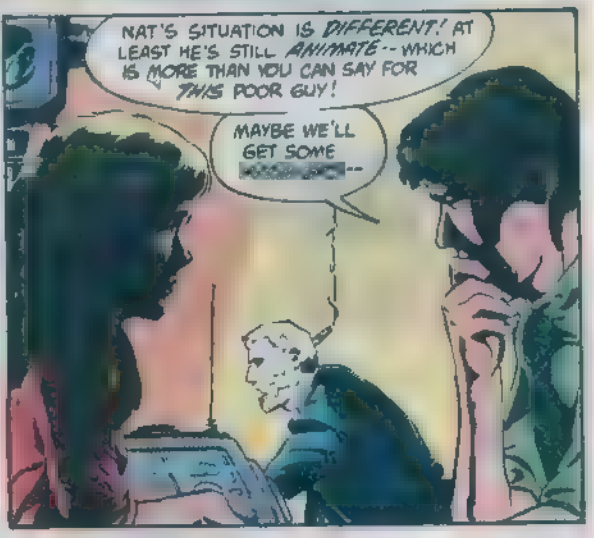
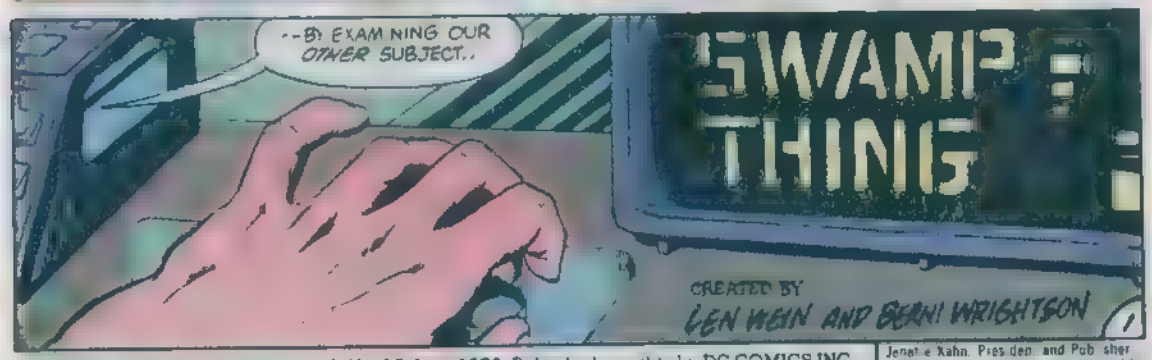
DO YOU READ ANYTHING YET THAT COULD BE OF USE--
--SOMETHING IN THE PHYSICAL STRUCTURE THAT MIGHT TELL US HOW WE CAN HELP HIM?
NOT A CLUE, SALLY... HIS MOLECULAR COMPOSITION ISN'T EVEN REMOTELY HUMAN ANY MORE


NAT'S SITUATION IS DIFFERENT! AT LEAST HE'S STILL ANIMATE--WHICH IS MORE THAN YOU CAN SAY FOR THIS POOR GUY!
MAYBE WE'LL GET SOME [illegible]--



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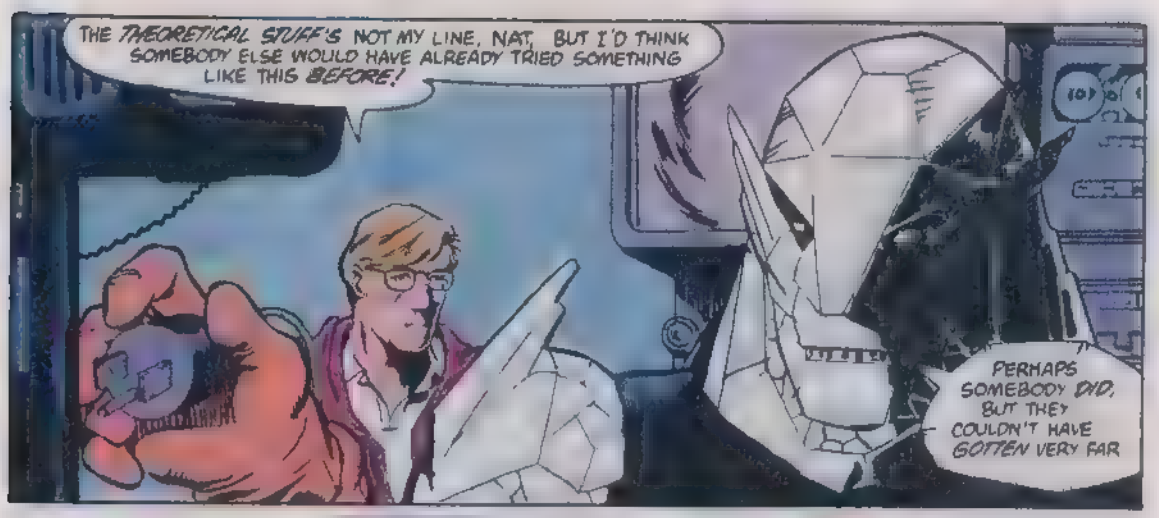
ONCE HE WAS A MAN. A SCIENTIST NAMED ALEC HOLLAND... THEN HE BECAME A CREATURE MORE PLANT-LIKE THAN HUMAN...
NOW HE IS ONLY A THING-- AN UNTHINKING, UNMOVING STATUE WITH NO MORE LIFE IN HIM, APPARENTLY, THAN A STONE!
HE IS A VICTIM OF TECHNOLOGY GONE AWRY-- AND OF EVIL BORN IN THE DEPTHS OF HORROR
AND SOON THE WHOLE WORLD MAY SHARE HIS FATE....!!
EMPIRES MADE OF SAND
A DAN MISHKIN & GUEST WRITER
BO & SCOTT HAMPTON & GUEST ARTISTS
LEN WEIN & EDITOR
PRESENTATION
ASSISTED BY TATJANA WOOD COLORIST & JOHN COSTANZA LETTERER
2

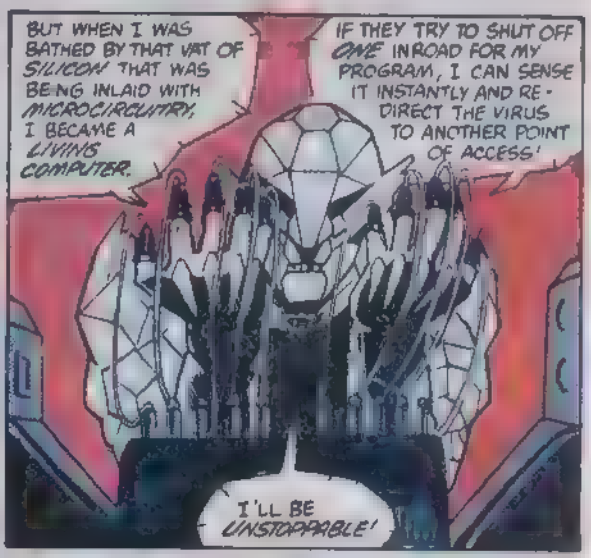
ANYTHING?
NO.. THE READINGS ON THE SWAMP-MAN ARE DIFFERENT..
--AS THOUGH HE STILL RETAINS SOMETHING OF HIS ORIGINAL COMPOSITION--
BUT THAT DOESN'T TELL US MUCH WHEN WE DON'T HAVE ANY IDEA WHAT THAT COMPOSITION WAS..
DO YOU HAVE ANY IDEAS, NAT?
WHEN I BATTLED HIM, I WAS IN A CRAZED STATE-- NOT KNOWING WHO I WAS OR HOW MY BODY HAD TURNED TO CRYSTAL!
I'M AFRAID I DIDN'T MAKE ANY NOTES ON THE SWAMP CREATURE!
I'M PUTTING MYSELF THROUGH EVERY TEST I CAN THINK OF-- AND I STILL CAN'T TELL HOW THE ACCIDENT IN MY LAB ALTERED ME AND GAVE ME A CRYSTAL TOUCH! *
THEN WE'RE NO CLOSER TO CURING YOU THAN WE WERE THREE DAYS AGO!
* THESE EVENTS OCCURRED LAST ISSUE--LEN.
OH, NAT. I'M FRIGHTENED FOR YOU...
DON'T BE, SAL... NOBODY KNOWS MORE ABOUT THE TECHNOLOGY THAT CAUSED THIS MESS THAN WE THREE... TOGETHER WE'LL FIND THE ANSWER.
I LOVE YOU, NAT.
I KNOW YOU DO, SALLY.
3

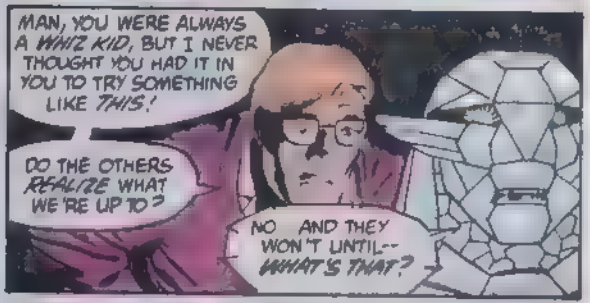
LISTEN, YOU TWO, I'VE GOT TO GET BACK TO GEORGE... HE'S RIGGING UP THE EQUIPMENT FOR SOME MORE TESTS.
KEEP AT IT ON YOUR END AND WE'LL SEE THIS THING THROUGH
YOU OKAY, SALLY?
YES IT'S JUST--
I WISH I COULD BE AS CONFIDENT AS HE IS I DON'T KNOW HOW HE MANAGES IT!
IT TEARS ME APART..TO THINK HE MIGHT BE THAT WAY FOREVER, WHEN HE WANTS SO BADLY TO BE HUMAN AGAIN!
THE... HELL... HE DOES..!
I'M SORRY, PETER--I CAN'T CONCENTRATE RIGHT NOW... CAN WE TAKE A BREAK?
HE'S..MAD WITH..POWER..!
CRYS.. CRYSTALL-IZED ME ON PURPOSE..!
NO PROBLEM. ALL THIS WILL KEEP.

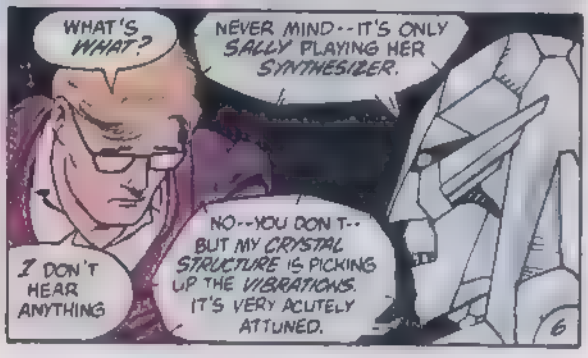
THEY'RE LEAVING... GOOD...
THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA... THAT MADE ME WHAT I AM, IS COUNTER-ACTING THE CRYSTAL EFFECT...
CRRAKK!
... JUST AS IT DID THE OTHER TIME...!
NOW I'LL BE ABLE TO LEAVE IN PEACE...
BUT HOLLAND'S DESIRES FOR PEACE, AS HAS OFTEN BEEN THE CASE MIGHT NOT BE SO EASY TO ACHIEVE...
... NOT WHEN THE CREATURE THAT WAS NATHANIEL BRODER HAS SCHEMES OF HIS OWN--
--THAT WILL ENSNARE ALL THOSE WHO TOIL IN HIS DOMAIN
ARE YOU SURE THIS IS GOING TO WORK?
THERE'S NO QUESTION ABOUT IT! BY RUNNING MY PROGRAM THROUGH THE COMPUTERS WE COMMUNICATE WITH--
--AND THEN THROUGH THE NETWORKS THEY'RE LINKED INTO-- AND MORE AND MORE NETWORKS WITH EACH STEP...
HERE LET ME TAKE THAT, GEORGE
...WE CAN EFFECTIVELY CONTROL THE OPERATIONS OF EVERY COMPUTER SYSTEM IN THE COUNTRY--PERHAPS THE WORLD!
THAT MEANS COMMUNICATIONS, DEFENSE, THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF INTERNATIONAL FINANCE..
ALL OF THEM WILL BE DEPENDENT ON ME!
I'LL HOLD THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM OF INFORMATION...! I WILL HAVE THE POWER THE WORLD RELIES ON!
5


THE THEORETICAL STUFF'S NOT MY LINE, NAT, BUT I'D THINK SOMEBODY ELSE WOULD HAVE ALREADY TRIED SOMETHING LIKE THIS BEFORE!
PERHAPS SOMEBODY DID, BUT THEY COULDN'T HAVE GOTTEN VERY FAR

IT WOULD NORMALLY BE A FAIRLY SIMPLE MATTER TO BLOCK OFF OR ROOT OUT THE SORT OF VIRUS PROGRAM I'M SUGGESTING.
THEN HOW..?
A COMPUTER DOESN'T THINK, GEORGE-- IT MERELY WORKS THROUGH PROBLEMS VERY QUICKLY! PRESENT IT WITH A NEW PROBLEM AND IT HAS TO GO BACK TO THE PROGRAMMER FOR INSTRUCTIONS!


BUT WHEN I WAS BATHED BY THAT VAT OF SILICON THAT WAS BEING INLAID WITH MICROCIRCUITRY, I BECAME A LIVING COMPUTER.
IF THEY TRY TO SHUT OFF ONE INROAD FOR MY PROGRAM, I CAN SENSE IT INSTANTLY AND RE-DIRECT THE VIRUS TO ANOTHER POINT OF ACCESS!
I'LL BE UNSTOPPABLE!


MAN, YOU WERE ALWAYS A WHIZ KID, BUT I NEVER THOUGHT YOU HAD IT IN YOU TO TRY SOMETHING LIKE THIS!
DO THE OTHERS REALIZE WHAT WE'RE UP TO?
NO AND THEY WON'T UNTIL-- WHAT'S THAT?


WHAT'S WHAT?
NEVER MIND--IT'S ONLY SALLY PLAYING HER SYNTHESIZER.
I DON'T HEAR ANYTHING
NO--YOU DON T-- BUT MY CRYSTAL STRUCTURE IS PICKING UP THE VIBRATIONS. IT'S VERY ACUTELY ATTUNED.

BUT WHILE THE CRYSTAL MAN'S PERCEPTIONS ARE ACCURATE, HIS CONCLUSIONS ARE NOT...
FOR ELSEWHERE IN THE BRODER ELECTRONICS COMPLEX...
WHO'S IN THERE? WHO'S PLAYING MY--
YOU!
BUT YOU'RE--DEAD! YOU WERE TURNED TO GLASS. . AND YOU SHATTERED!
THE UNYIELDING JUSTICE I REPRESENT CAN NEVER BE SHATTERED, SALLY BRODER!
BUT WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME? DO YOU KNOW OF A WAY TO HELP MY HUSBAND?
I HAVE COME BECAUSE YOU FACE A CHOICE WHICH NO ONE SHOULD CONFRONT ALONE
NAT--?
I'M SORRY--I DIDN'T MEAN TO DISTURB YOU... I JUST WANTED TO LISTEN PLEASE--DON'T STOP PLAYING
WHAT CHOICE? WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO TELL ME--?
KNOCK KNOCK
BUT IT WASN'T--! THAT IS--
7

I--I WAS FINISHED ANYWAY BUT IF YOU'D LIKE TO HEAR MORE..
I WOULD YOUR PLAYING ALWAYS SOOTHES ME, AND THE MUSIC HAS A DELIGHTFUL EFFECT ON MY NEW FORM
I WONDERED, THOUGH, WHY YOU WERE IN HERE NOW.. YOU DON'T USUALLY PLAY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE DAY UNLESS YOU RE DISTRESSED.
IS ANYTHING WRONG, DARLING?
THE VOICE THAT RESONATES THROUGH THE SILICATE MOUTH IS NOT TOTALLY UNFAMILIAR TO SALLY BRODER--AND YET IT IS MONSTROUSLY CHANGED...
LET ME PLAY SOMETHING FOR YOU.
I'D LIKE THAT
NOT SO MUCH IN ITS TONAL QUALITY, BUT IN THE NATURE OF THE INTELLISENCE THAT STANDS BEHIND IT
AND WHERE EARLIER SALLY FEARED FOR HER HUSBAND'S WELL-BEING SHE NOW FINDS HERSELF CONSUMED BY MOUNTING WORRY--
NO--UH, NO, IT'S JUST ALL THAT'S HAPPENED SINCE THE ACCIDENT... I GUESS I'M A LITTLE ON EDGE.
--FOR HER OWN!
8

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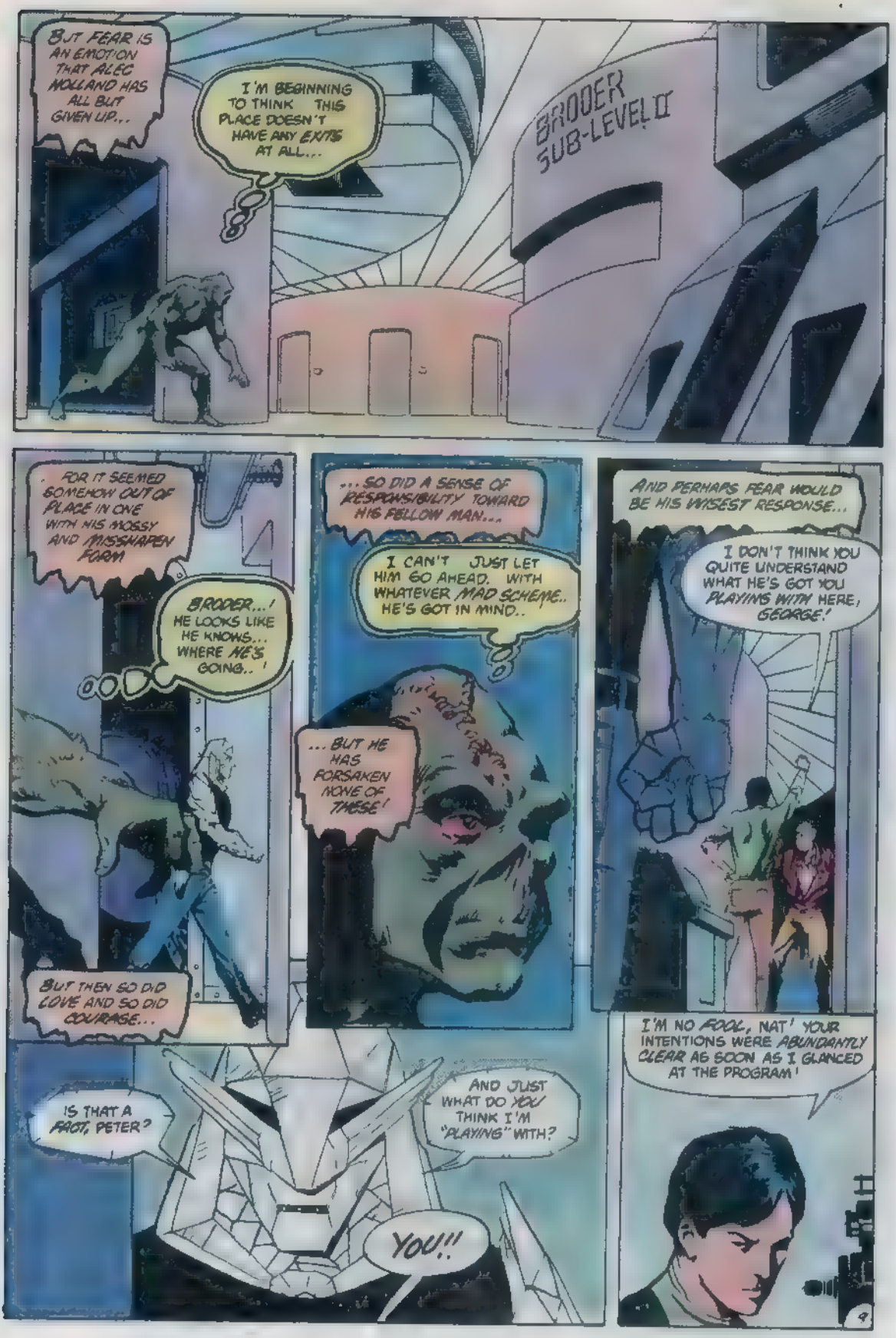

BUT FEAR IS AN EMOTION THAT ALEC HOLLAND HAS ALL BUT GIVEN UP...
I'M BEGINNING TO THINK THIS PLACE DOESN'T HAVE ANY EXITS AT ALL...
BRODER SUB-LEVEL II
FOR IT SEEMED SOMEHOW OUT OF PLACE IN ONE WITH HIS MOSSY AND MISSHAPEN FORM
BRODER...! HE LOOKS LIKE HE KNOWS... WHERE HE'S GOING..!
BUT THEN SO DID LOVE AND SO DID COURAGE...
...SO DID A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY TOWARD HIS FELLOW MAN...
I CAN'T JUST LET HIM GO AHEAD. WITH WHATEVER MAD SCHEME.. HE'S GOT IN MIND..
...BUT HE HAS FORSAKEN NONE OF THESE!
IS THAT A FACT, PETER?
AND JUST WHAT DO YOU THINK I'M "PLAYING" WITH?
YOU!!
AND PERHAPS FEAR WOULD BE HIS WISEST RESPONSE...
I DON'T THINK YOU QUITE UNDERSTAND WHAT HE'S GOT YOU PLAYING WITH HERE, GEORGE!
I'M NO FOOL, NAT! YOUR INTENTIONS WERE ABUNDANTLY CLEAR AS SOON AS I GLANCED AT THE PROGRAM!

THIS IS ALL SOME WILD POWER PLAY! YOU BECOME THE GATEKEEPER OF THE ELECTRONIC AGE!
AND YOU'RE CRAZY ENOUGH TO THINK THE WORLD WILL JUST KNUCKLE UNDER!
DO YOU HONESTLY BELIEVE THAT EVERY-ONE WILL SIMPLY GO ALONG WITH YOU?
WHAT ARE THE FOLKS AT THE PENTAGON AND THE KREMLIN GOING TO DO WHEN YOU DENY THEM THEIR STRATEGIC INTELLIGENCE?!
I'LL TELL YOU WHAT THEY'LL DO--THEY'LL DECIDE THEY'D BETTER BLOW EACH OTHER UP BEFORE THEY GET BLOWN UP FIRST.
AND YOU'LL BE THE RULER OF A PLANET MADE OF RUBBLE!
ENOUGH!
YOU TALK TOO MUCH, MURDOCK! NOW YOU'LL HAVE TO BE SHUT UP PERMANENTLY!
NO!
YOU RE NOT TURNING ME INTO A MEMBER OF YOUR GLASS MENAGERIE!
10

KLANK!
LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME FOR ME... TO STOP HANGING AROUND DOORWAYS, LIKE SOME GOSSIP COLUMNIST...
...AND START TAKING AN ACTIVE ROLE...!
BRODER!
AGAIN!
I SEE YOUR BIZARRE PHYSIOLOGY HAS THWARTED MY CRYSTAL TOUCH ONCE AGAIN!
IT APPEARS I'LL HAVE TO USE MORE VIOLENT MEANS TO--
WHAT?!
I GUESS VIOLENCE.. ISN'T ALL IT'S CRACKED UP TO BE...'
I'M NOT SURE WHO OR WHAT YOU ARE, SWAMP-MAN; BUT YOU WON'T STOP ME!
NOTHING IN THIS WORLD IS GOING TO STOP ME!

DON'T COUNT ON IT, MADMAN..!
YOU STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND, DO YOU?
CRRAK!
YOU STILL DON'T SEE THAT I WAS BORN FOR THIS MOMENT IN HISTORY!
MY DESTINY IS SEALED AND YOU CANNOT CHANGE IT!
EVEN THOUGH YOU'VE RESISTED MY POWER YOU CAN'T INHIBIT IT TOTALLY...
AND THIS TIME WHEN I TURN YOU INTO CRYSTAL, I'LL SMASH YOU INTO A BILLION TINY PIECES!
HE'LL DO IT TOO! HE'S STRONGER THAN I AM AND I CAN'T BREAK FREE...!
GOT TO USE WILL POWER TO MAKE THE CHEMICALS IN MY BODY.. KEEP RESISTING HIM...!
BAH! THIS IS WASTING PRECIOUS TIME! MY STRENGTH ALONE CAN DESTROY YOU IF YOU DARE TO GET IN MY WAY AGAIN!
THAT'S A CHANCE... I'LL HAVE TO TAKE...
...AS SOON AS I CAN GET UP AGAIN...!
2

BUT UNFORTUNATELY FOR SALLY BRODER, THAT MIGHT NOT BE SOON ENOUGH.
WHAT IN BLAZES IS GOING ON HERE? THE SWAMP CREATURE COULDN'T HAVE JUST GOTTEN UP AND WALKED OU--
SALLY! THANK GOD I FOUND YOU!
WHAT'S WRONG, PETER?!
IT'S HIM! HE'S GONE CRAZY--! HE WANTS TO TAKE OVER THE WORLD!
WHO'S GONE CRAZY? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?!
I TOLD YOU BEFORE, MURDOCK! YOU TALK TOO MUCH!
SMRASH!
NAT...?
HE DESIGNED A TERRIFIC NEW PROGRAM, SAL...
IT'LL ALLOW HIM TO TAKE CONTROL OF ALL ELECTRONIC COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS!
IS THAT TRUE--?
YOU'LL BE RIGHT BESIDE ME, SALLY YOU'LL BE MY QUEEN!
3

I JUST HAVE TO GET RID OF THOSE WHO STAND IN MY WAY!
WHAT DID I TELL YOU? HE'S NUTS!
KARRASHK
STOP IT, NAT! YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE DOING! YOU'LL--
OH, I DO KNOW WHAT I'M DOING, SALLY..
C'MON NAT, YOU CAN'T! YOU WOULDN'T!
FOR THE LOVE OF GOD I'M YOUR BEST FR--
I KNOW PRECISELY WHAT I'M DOING!
STAY AWAY..! DON'T TAKE ANOTHER STEP CLOSER!
I'M NOT GOING TO HURT YOU, SALLY--NOT AS LONG AS YOU UNDERSTAND..
.. NOT AS LONG AS YOU'RE GOOD!
14

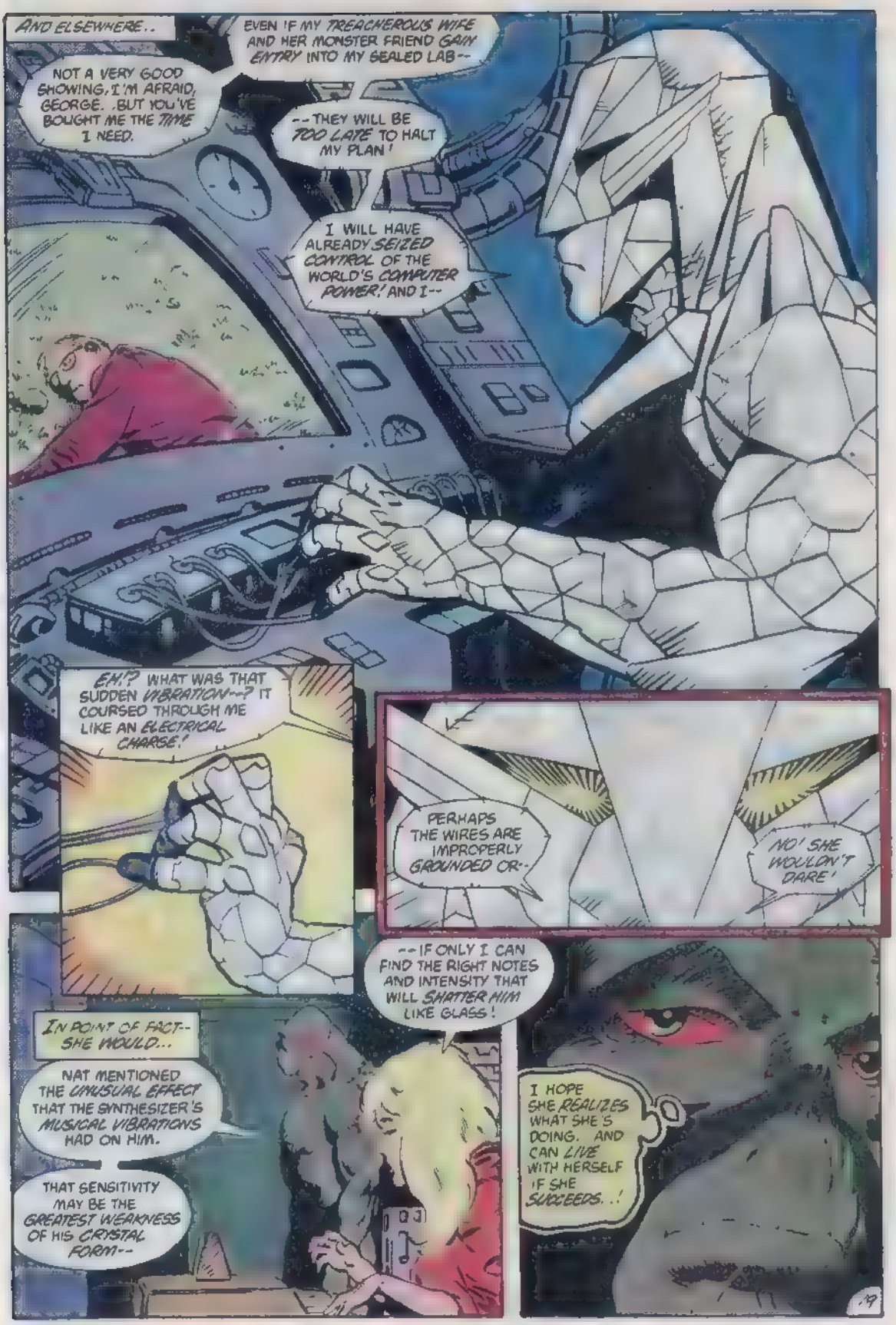
THE VOICE IS NO LONGER THAT OF ANYONE BUT A TOTAL STRANGER--
--AND SALLY KNOWS THAT HER STATUS AS QUEEN IS AS TENTATIVE AS THE CRYSTAL MAN'S SANITY.
AND SO SHE FLEES--
--INTO THE ARMS OF YET ANOTHER MISBEGOTTEN PRODUCT OF SCIENCE RUN AMOK!
AIEEEE!
NO! I WON'T HURT YOU..!
WHERE'S..? AN EXIT..?
THAT--THAT WAY--! AROUND THE CORNER--AND UP TWO FLIGHTS!
I--I--
TELL ME...!
WE'RE NOT.. GOING TO MAKE IT...LIKE THIS.!
HE'S TOO CLOSE.. I'LL HAVE TO STAND AND...
15

FIGHT...?
WHAT IN THE..
HOW DID WE END UP--OH, IT'S YOU! WHAT DID YOU DO, TELEPORT US HERE SOME-HOW?
WHAT I DID IS UNIMPORTANT. YOU NEEDED TIME TO MAKE YOUR DECISION AND I HAVE GIVEN YOU THAT TIME
YES, MY DECISION... YOU WANT ME TO STOP NAT--
--EVEN IF IT MEANS KILLING HIM!
IT IS THE ONLY WAY--AND YOU THE ONLY ONE
BUT HE WASN'T CRAZY--MALICIOUS --LIKE THIS BEFORE! IF WE COULD ONLY TURN HIM BACK...
NO, SALLY BRODER.
YOUR HUSBAND HAS CROSSED OVER A LINE THAT SEPARATES HUMANITY FROM THE MOST HEINOUS EVIL..
AND THAT STEP, ONCE TAKEN CAN NEVER BE RETRACED!
THERE THEY ARE, NAT-- ON THE NORTH QUAD.
ALL RIGHT... YOU KNOW WHAT TO DO.
16

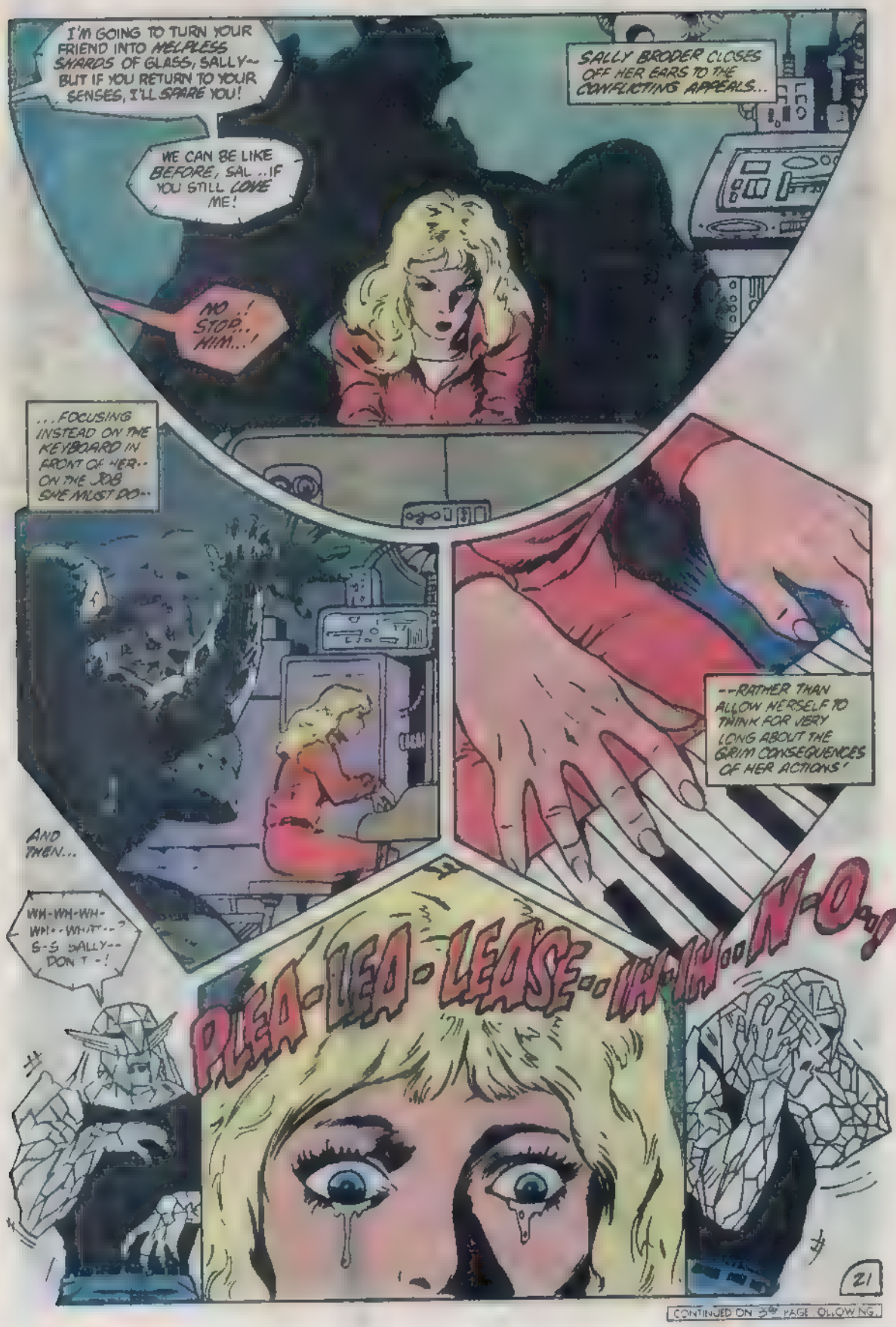
YOU'RE WONDERING, ALEC HOLLAND, HOW YOU TWO WILL BE ABLE TO STOP THE CRYSTAL MENACE-- WHEN ALL YOUR EFFORTS HAVE FAILED THUS FAR
BUT HOW..?
YOUR COMPANION ALREADY KNOWS THE ANSWER TO THAT.. ALTHOUGH SHE HAS NOT REALIZED IT YET
ME? I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU RE--
FREEZE! ALL THREE OF YOU!
GEORGE--?! WHAT ARE YOU TRYING TO DO?
I HOPED IT WOULDN'T HAVE TO COME TO THIS, SAL, BUT NAT GAVE THE ORDER..
TAKE THEM!
I DON'T WANT TO HURT THESE CLOWNS. IF I CAN AVOID IT.
BZZAM!
GOOD OLD GEORGE... HAS PROBABLY CONVINCED THEM THAT WE RE THE BAD GUYS!
HIT HIM HARD AND FAST, MIKE... GARY AND ROB ARE GONNA NEED HELP WITH THE MUCK MONSTER!
17

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

WHAT THE--? HE'S GONE!
THAT'S QUITE AN ACT.. THE STRANGER'S GOT.. ' HE GETS TO PLAY MAN OF MYSTERY...
THOK
AND HE LETS SOMEBODY ELSE... CLEAN UP THE MESS..!
SAY.. WHAT'S SALLY UP TO...?
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE, GEORGE! THE WAY I FEEL RIGHT NOW, I WOULDN'T HESITATE TO USE THIS!
I CAN EXPLAIN, SAL...
NOT NECESSARY.. I UNDERSTAND YOU ONLY TOO WELL!
WE NEED A LITTLE TIME, ALEC... HE CALLED YOU ALEC, RIGHT?
DO ME A FAVOR AND MAKE THEM ALL UNCONSCIOUS OR SOMETHING!
I THINK I KNOW HOW TO STOP NAT-- BUT I'M GOING TO NEED YOUR HELP!
18


AND ELSEWHERE..
EVEN IF MY TREACHEROUS WIFE AND HER MONSTER FRIEND GAIN ENTRY INTO MY SEALED LAB--
NOT A VERY GOOD SHOWING, I'M AFRAID, GEORGE. .BUT YOU'VE BOUGHT ME THE TIME I NEED.
--THEY WILL BE TOO LATE TO HALT MY PLAN!
I WILL HAVE ALREADY SEIZED CONTROL OF THE WORLD'S COMPUTER POWER! AND I--
EH!? WHAT WAS THAT SUDDEN VIBRATION--? IT COURSED THROUGH ME LIKE AN ELECTRICAL CHARGE!
PERHAPS THE WIRES ARE IMPROPERLY GROUNDED OR--
NO! SHE WOULDN'T DARE!
--IF ONLY I CAN FIND THE RIGHT NOTES AND INTENSITY THAT WILL SHATTER HIM LIKE GLASS!
IN POINT OF FACT-- SHE WOULD...
NAT MENTIONED THE UNUSUAL EFFECT THAT THE SYNTHESIZER'S MUSICAL VIBRATIONS HAD ON HIM.
THAT SENSITIVITY MAY BE THE GREATEST WEAKNESS OF HIS CRYSTAL FORM--
I HOPE SHE REALIZES WHAT SHE'S DOING. AND CAN LIVE WITH HERSELF IF SHE SUCCEEDS..!
19

DESPITE WHAT HE'S BECOME... IT'S HER OWN HUSBAND SHE'LL BE DESTROYING...!
IT'LL TAKE TIME TO FIND THE RIGHT HARMONIC VARIATION! SO I'M COUNTING ON YOU TO--
THUNK
WHA...?
HERE HE COMES! I'VE GOT TO HOLD HIM OFF WHILE SALLY FINDS THE CORRECT FREQUENCY..
STOP IT, SALLY! STOP IT NOW!
SETS UP THE SYMPATHETIC VIBRATIONS... TO BLOW HIM TO SMITHEREENS!
YOU'RE TRYING TO KILL ME, BUT I WON'T LET THAT HAPPEN!


I'M GOING TO TURN YOUR FRIEND INTO MELPLESS SHARDS OF GLASS, SALLY-- BUT IF YOU RETURN TO YOUR SENSES, I'LL SPARE YOU!
WE CAN BE LIKE BEFORE, SAL ..IF YOU STILL LOVE ME!
NO! STOP.. HIM..!
SALLY BRODER CLOSES OFF HER EARS TO THE CONFLICTING APPEALS..
...FOCUSING INSTEAD ON THE KEYBOARD IN FRONT OF HER-- ON THE JOB SHE MUST DO--
--RATHER THAN ALLOW HERSELF TO THINK FOR VERY LONG ABOUT THE GRIM CONSEQUENCES OF HER ACTIONS!
AND THEN...
WH-WH-WH-WH--WHAT--? S-S SALLY-- DON'T-!
PLEA-LEA-LEASE--IH-IH--N-O-!

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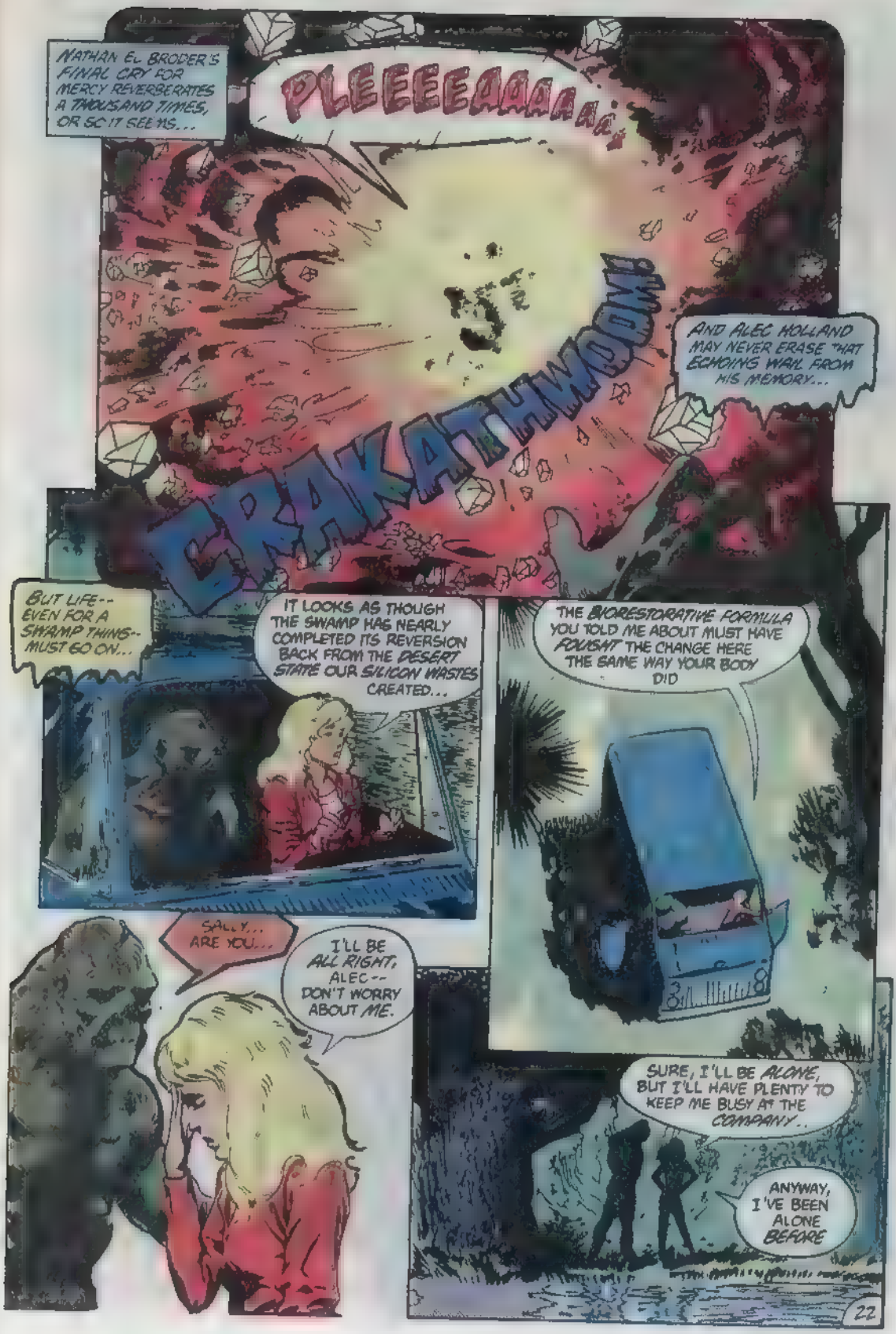
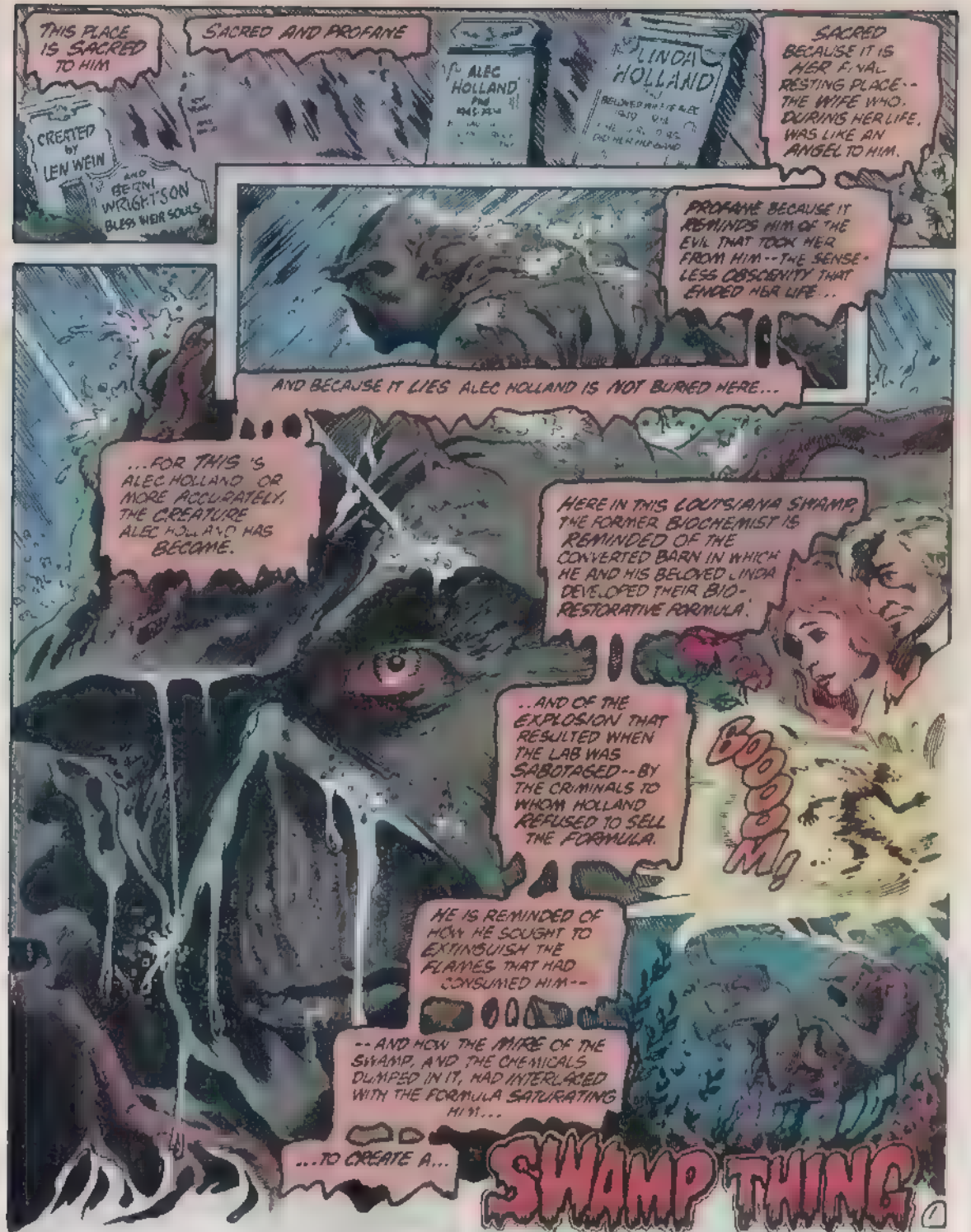

NATHAN EL BRODER'S FINAL CRY FOR MERCY REVERBERATES A THOUSAND TIMES, OR SO IT SEEMS...
PLEEEEAAAAA
KRAKATHWOOM!
AND ALEC HOLLAND MAY NEVER ERASE THAT ECHOING WAIL FROM HIS MEMORY...
BUT LIFE-- EVEN FOR A SWAMP THING-- MUST GO ON...
IT LOOKS AS THOUGH THE SWAMP HAS NEARLY COMPLETED ITS REVERSION BACK FROM THE DESERT STATE OUR SILICON WASTES CREATED...
THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA YOU TOLD ME ABOUT MUST HAVE FOUGHT THE CHANGE HERE THE SAME WAY YOUR BODY DID
SALLY... ARE YOU...
I'LL BE ALL RIGHT, ALEC-- DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
SURE, I'LL BE ALONE, BUT I'LL HAVE PLENTY TO KEEP ME BUSY AT THE COMPANY..
ANYWAY, I'VE BEEN ALONE BEFORE
22

AND I THINK THAT YOU MUST BE EVEN LOVELIER
IF I CAN EVER HELP-- IN ANY WAY-- WELL...
GOOD-BYE, ALEC.
THE DREAMS THAT MEN LIVE BY ARE SOMETIMES CRUEL AND UNFORGIVING...
LIKE ALEC HOLLAND'S LONGING FOR HIS LOST HUMANITY, A DREAM UNFULFILLED CAN BE A LIFETIME'S CURSE!
AND OF SUCH VISIONS THAT ARE GRANTED, EXPERIENCE ADVISES CAUTION..
..FOR A DREAM MIGHT LAY THE GROUNDWORK FOR GREAT TOWERS OF ACCOMPLISHMENT- OR FOR GLEAMING, GLORIOUS STRUCTURES THAT ARE IN TRUTH--
--ONLY MADE OF SAND.
NEXT ISSUE: 'STOPOVER IN A PLACE OF SECRET TRUTHS!' BE HERE!
23

The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO 16
AUG.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
T. YEATES


THIS PLACE IS SACRED TO HIM
SACRED AND PROFANE
ALEC HOLLAND
LINDA HOLLAND
SACRED BECAUSE IT IS HER FINAL RESTING PLACE-- THE WIFE WHO, DURING HER LIFE, WAS LIKE AN ANGEL TO HIM.
CREATED BY LEN WEIN AND BERNI WRIGHTSON BLESS THEIR SOULS
PROFANE BECAUSE IT REMINDS HIM OF THE EVIL THAT TOOK HER FROM HIM--THE SENSELESS OBSCENITY THAT ENDED HER LIFE..
AND BECAUSE IT LIES ALEC HOLLAND IS NOT BURIED HERE...
...FOR THIS 'IS' ALEC HOLLAND OR MORE ACCURATELY, THE CREATURE ALEC HOLLAND HAS BECOME.
HERE IN THIS LOUISIANA SWAMP, THE FORMER BIOCHEMIST IS REMINDED OF THE CONVERTED BARN IN WHICH HE AND HIS BELOVED LINDA DEVELOPED THEIR BIO-RESTORATIVE FORMULA.
..AND OF THE EXPLOSION THAT RESULTED WHEN THE LAB WAS SABOTAGED--BY THE CRIMINALS TO WHOM HOLLAND REFUSED TO SELL THE FORMULA.
BOOOM!
HE IS REMINDED OF HOW HE SOUGHT TO EXTINGUISH THE FLAMES THAT HAD CONSUMED HIM--
--AND HOW THE MIRE OF THE SWAMP, AND THE CHEMICALS DUMPED IN IT, HAD INTERLACED WITH THE FORMULA SATURATING HIM...
...TO CREATE A...
SWAMP THING

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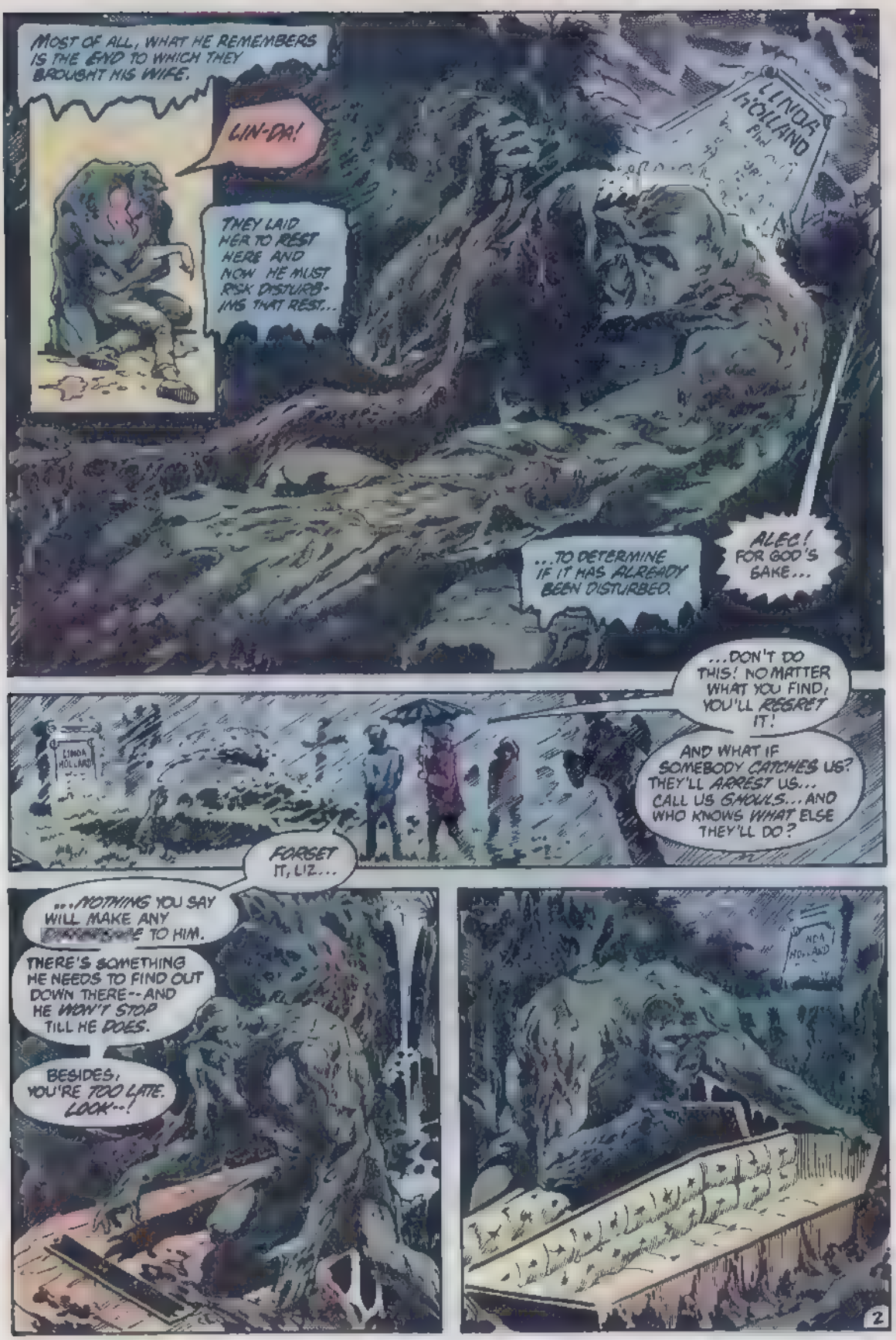
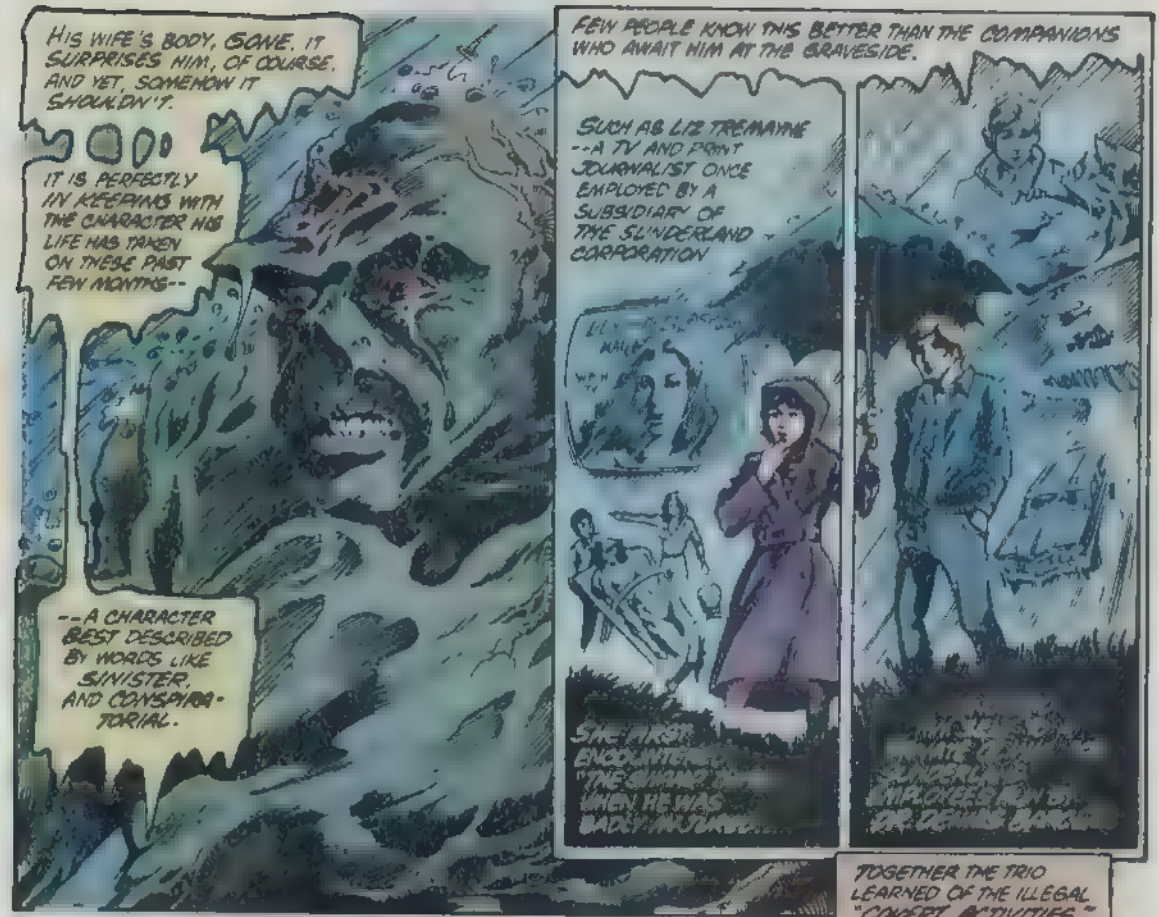
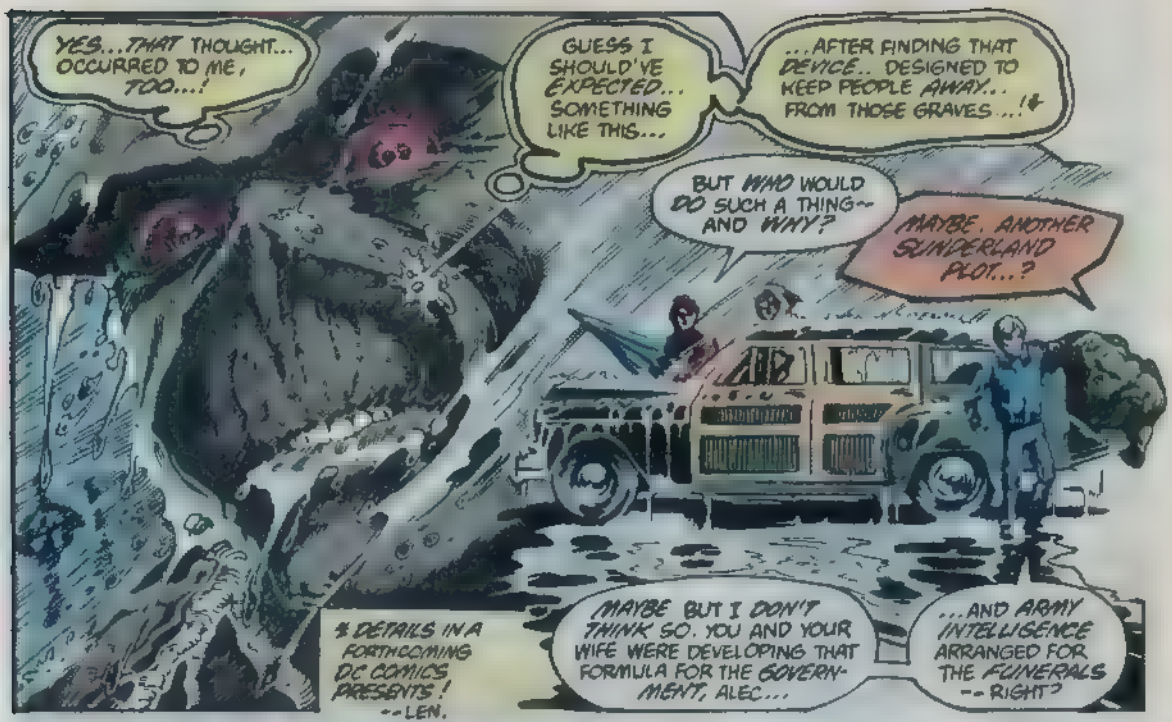
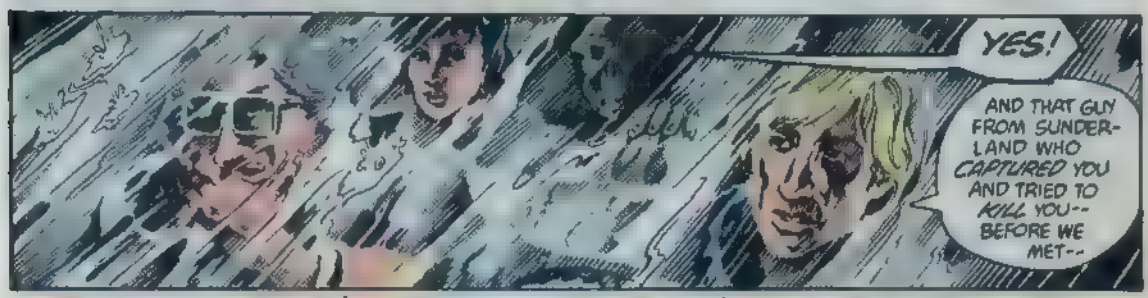

MOST OF ALL, WHAT HE REMEMBERS IS THE END TO WHICH THEY BROUGHT HIS WIFE.
LIN-DA!
THEY LAID HER TO REST HERE AND NOW HE MUST RISK DISTURBING THAT REST...
LINDA HOLLAND
...TO DETERMINE IF IT HAS ALREADY BEEN DISTURBED.
ALEC! FOR GOD'S SAKE...
...DON'T DO THIS! NO MATTER WHAT YOU FIND, YOU'LL REGRET IT!
AND WHAT IF SOMEBODY CATCHES US? THEY'LL ARREST US... CALL US GHOULS... AND WHO KNOWS WHAT ELSE THEY'LL DO?
FORGET IT, LIZ...
...NOTHING YOU SAY WILL MAKE ANY [illegible] TO HIM.
THERE'S SOMETHING HE NEEDS TO FIND OUT DOWN THERE--AND HE WON'T STOP TILL HE DOES.
BESIDES, YOU'RE TOO LATE. LOOK--!
2


HIS WIFE'S BODY, GONE. IT SURPRISES HIM, OF COURSE. AND YET, SOMEHOW IT SHOULDN'T.
IT IS PERFECTLY IN KEEPING WITH THE CHARACTER HIS LIFE HAS TAKEN ON THESE PAST FEW MONTHS--
--A CHARACTER BEST DESCRIBED BY WORDS LIKE SINISTER, AND CONSPIRATORIAL.
FEW PEOPLE KNOW THIS BETTER THAN THE COMPANIONS WHO AWAIT HIM AT THE GRAVESIDE.
SUCH AS LIZ TREMAYNE --A TV AND PRINT JOURNALIST ONCE EMPLOYED BY A SUBSIDIARY OF THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION

TOGETHER THE TRIO LEARNED OF THE ILLEGAL "COVERT ACTIVITIES" IN WHICH SUNDERLAND WAS ENGAGED.
NOW, HE POSSES A THREAT TO THE SECURITY OF THAT CORRUPT MULTINATIONAL CONGLOMERATE...

... AND--ALONG WITH HOLLAND, BARCLAY AND TREMAYNE, WHO KNOW ITS SECRETS--HE HAS BEEN MARKED FOR DEATH BY ITS MOST RUTHLESS EXECUTIVES.

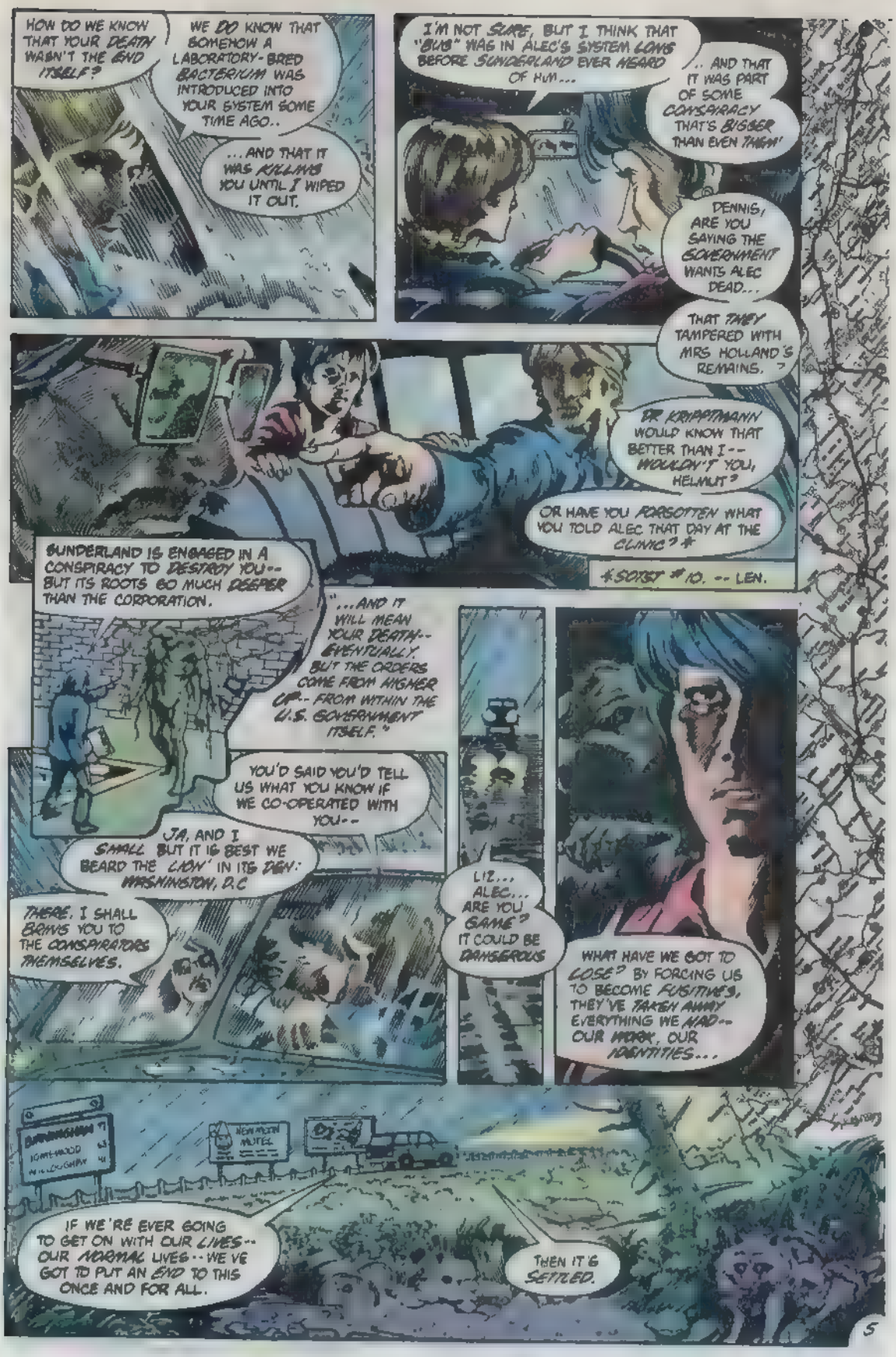

YES...THAT THOUGHT... OCCURRED TO ME, TOO...!
GUESS I SHOULD'VE EXPECTED... SOMETHING LIKE THIS...
...AFTER FINDING THAT DEVICE.. DESIGNED TO KEEP PEOPLE AWAY.. FROM THOSE GRAVES...!*
BUT WHO WOULD DO SUCH A THING-- AND WHY?
MAYBE. ANOTHER SUNDERLAND PLOT...?
* DETAILS IN A FORTHCOMING DC COMICS PRESENTS! --LEN.
MAYBE BUT I DON'T THINK SO. YOU AND YOUR WIFE WERE DEVELOPING THAT FORMULA FOR THE GOVERNMENT, ALEC...
...AND ARMY INTELLIGENCE ARRANGED FOR THE FUNERALS -- RIGHT?



"--REMEMBER WHAT HE TOLD YOU?"

YOU'RE WONDERING HOW I KNOW SO MUCH ABOUT YOU-- AREN'T YOU, DR. HOLLAND?
WELL, SUNDERLAND HAS A LOT OF CONTRACTS WITH THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT...
...AND CERTAIN OF OUR.. AH.. ASSOCIATES IN THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY HAVE BEEN VERY... GENEROUS WITH YOUR DOSSIER.
THAT IS HOW I KNOW THAT NOT ONLY IS DR. ALEC HOLLAND STILL ALIVE, BUT THAT YOU ARE HE.

THEY SAID THEY INTENDED TO VIVISECT YOU--AND RECONSTRUCT YOUR FORMULA FROM AN ANALYSIS OF YOUR TISSUES.
BUT HOW DO WE KNOW THAT KILLING YOU WAS JUST A MEANS TO AN END, FROM THEIR POINT OF VIEW?
4



HOW DO WE KNOW THAT YOUR DEATH WASN'T THE END ITSELF?

WE DO KNOW THAT SOMEHOW A LABORATORY-BRED BACTERIUM WAS INTRODUCED INTO YOUR SYSTEM SOME TIME AGO..

...AND THAT IT WAS KILLING YOU UNTIL I WIPED IT OUT.

I'M NOT SURE, BUT I THINK THAT "BUG" WAS IN ALEC'S SYSTEM LONG BEFORE SUNDERLAND EVER HEARD OF HIM...

.. AND THAT IT WAS PART OF SOME CONSPIRACY THAT'S BIGGER THAN EVEN THEM!

DENNIS, ARE YOU SAYING THE GOVERNMENT WANTS ALEC DEAD...

THAT THEY TAMPERED WITH MRS HOLLAND'S REMAINS. ?

DR KRIPPTMANN WOULD KNOW THAT BETTER THAN I-- WOULDN'T YOU, HELMUT?

OR HAVE YOU FORGOTTEN WHAT YOU TOLD ALEC THAT DAY AT THE CLINIC? *

*SOTST #10. -- LEN.

SUNDERLAND IS ENGAGED IN A CONSPIRACY TO DESTROY YOU-- BUT ITS ROOTS GO MUCH DEEPER THAN THE CORPORATION.

"...AND IT WILL MEAN YOUR DEATH-- EVENTUALLY. BUT THE ORDERS COME FROM HIGHER UP-- FROM WITHIN THE U.S. GOVERNMENT ITSELF."

YOU'D SAID YOU'D TELL US WHAT YOU KNOW IF WE CO-OPERATED WITH YOU--

JA, AND I SHALL BUT IT IS BEST WE BEARD THE LION' IN ITS DEN: WASHINGTON, D.C

THERE. I SHALL BRING YOU TO THE CONSPIRATORS THEMSELVES.

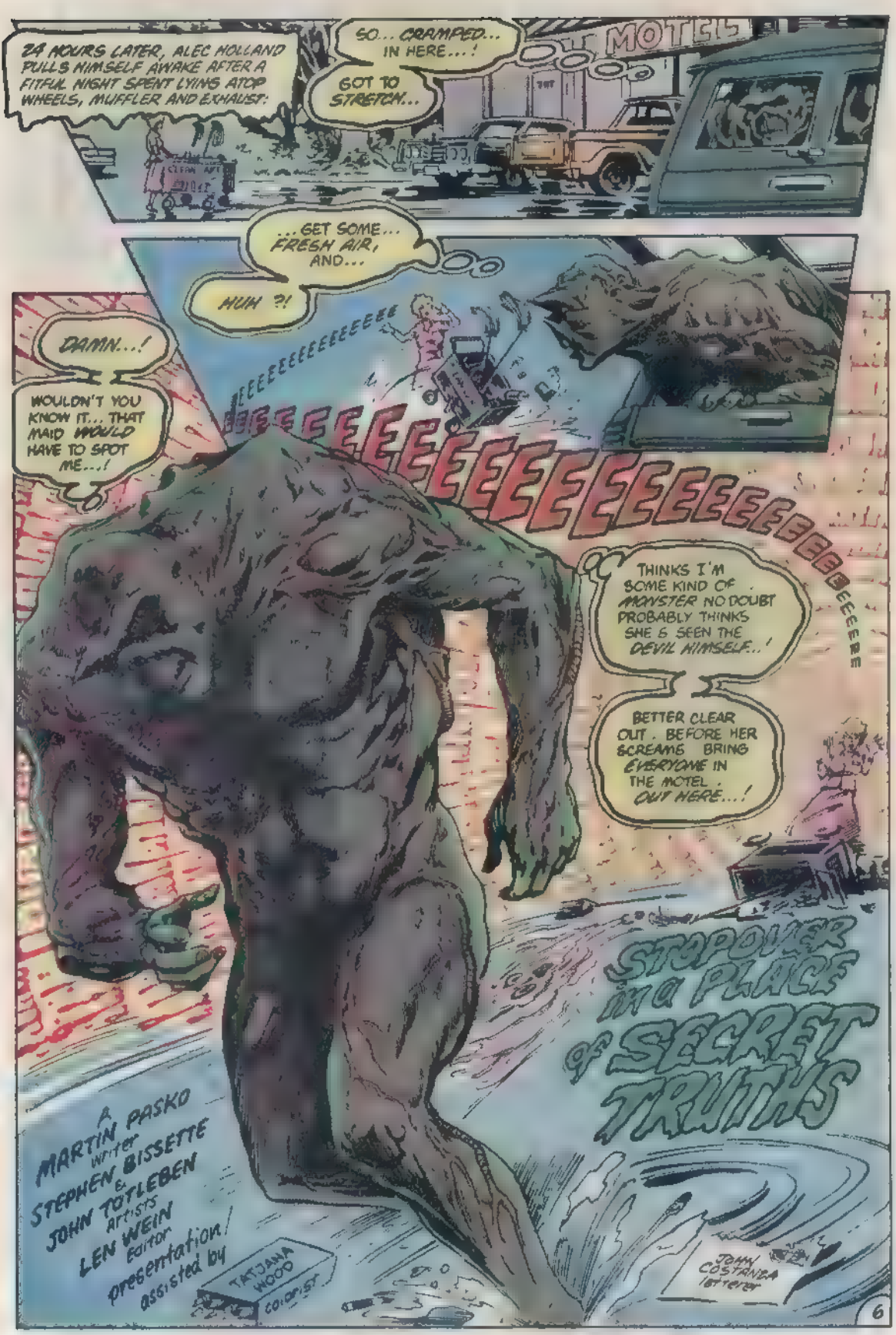
LIZ... ALEC... ARE YOU GAME? IT COULD BE DANGEROUS

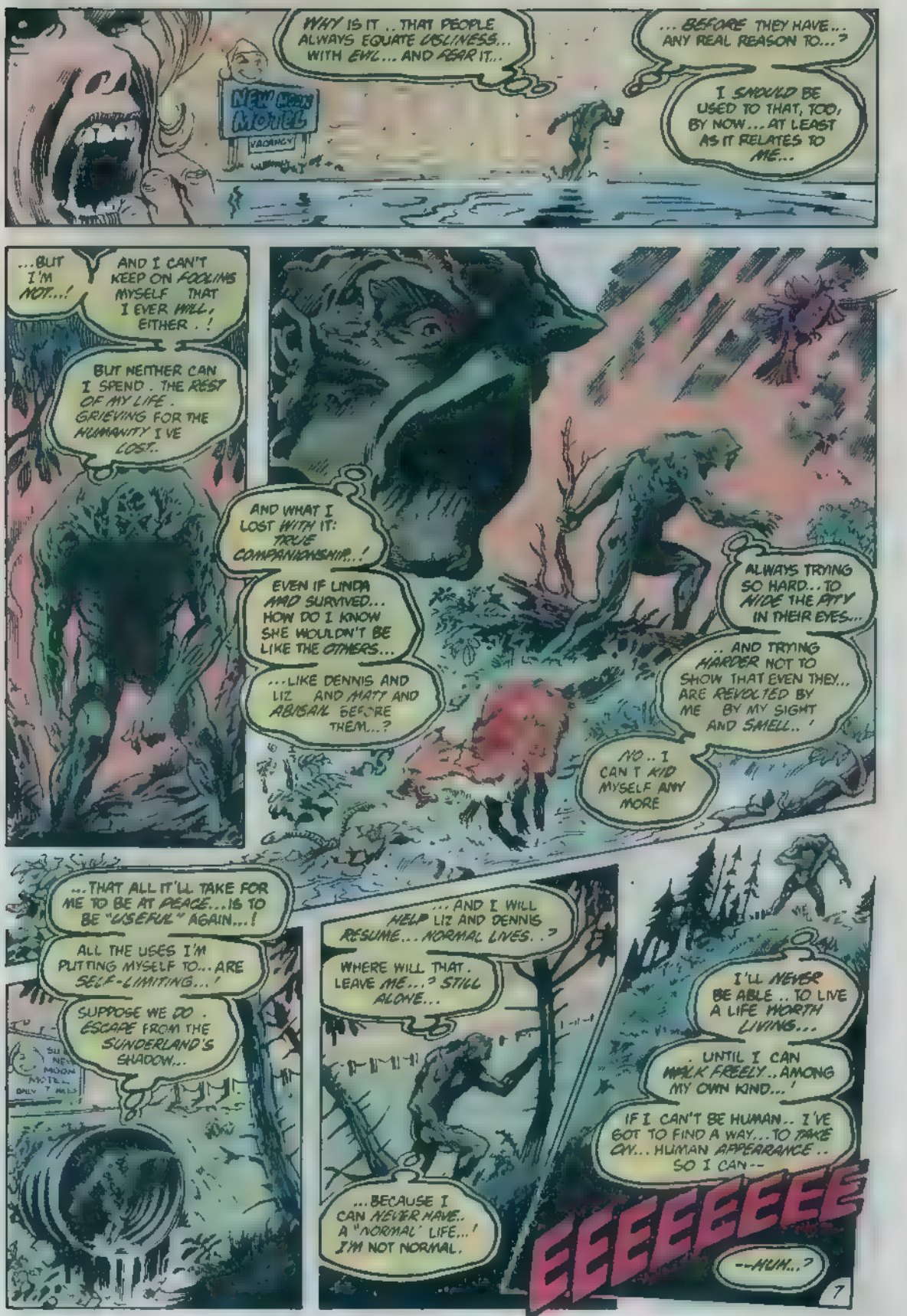
WHAT HAVE WE GOT TO LOSE? BY FORCING US TO BECOME FUGITIVES, THEY'VE TAKEN AWAY EVERYTHING WE HAD-- OUR WORK, OUR IDENTITIES...

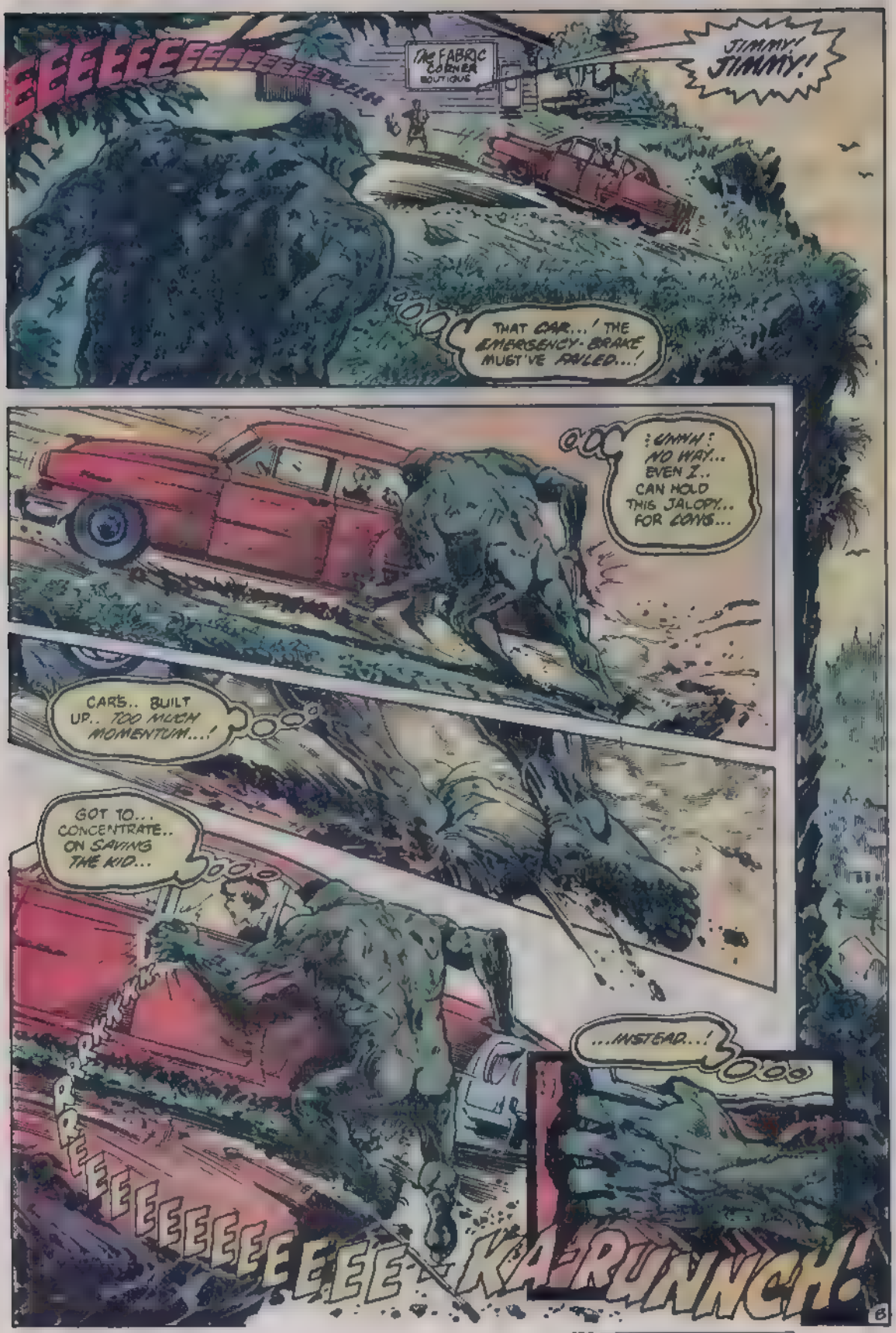
NEW MOON MOTEL

IF WE'RE EVER GOING TO GET ON WITH OUR LIVES-- OUR NORMAL LIVES-- WE'VE GOT TO PUT AN END TO THIS ONCE AND FOR ALL.

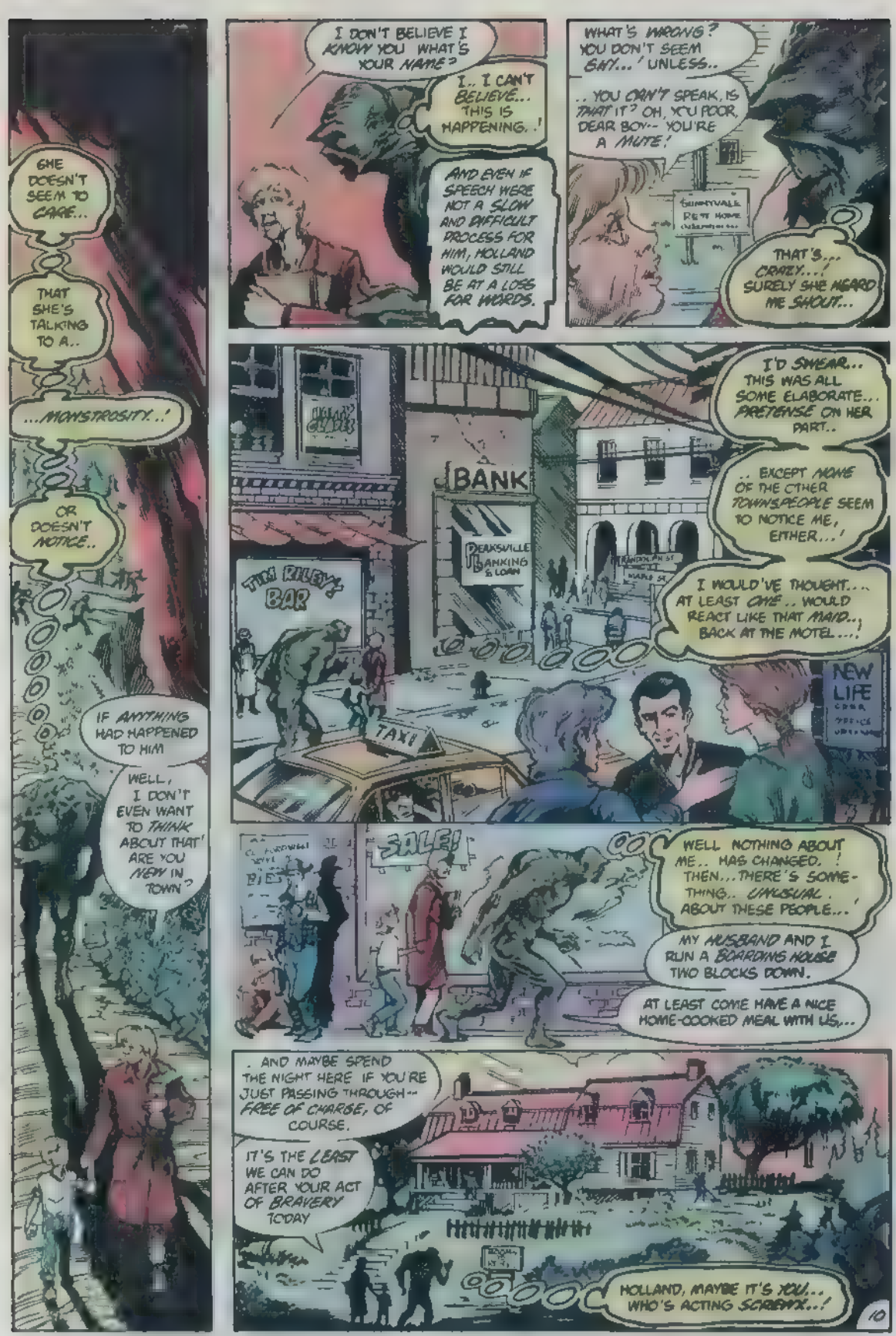
THEN IT'S SETTLED.

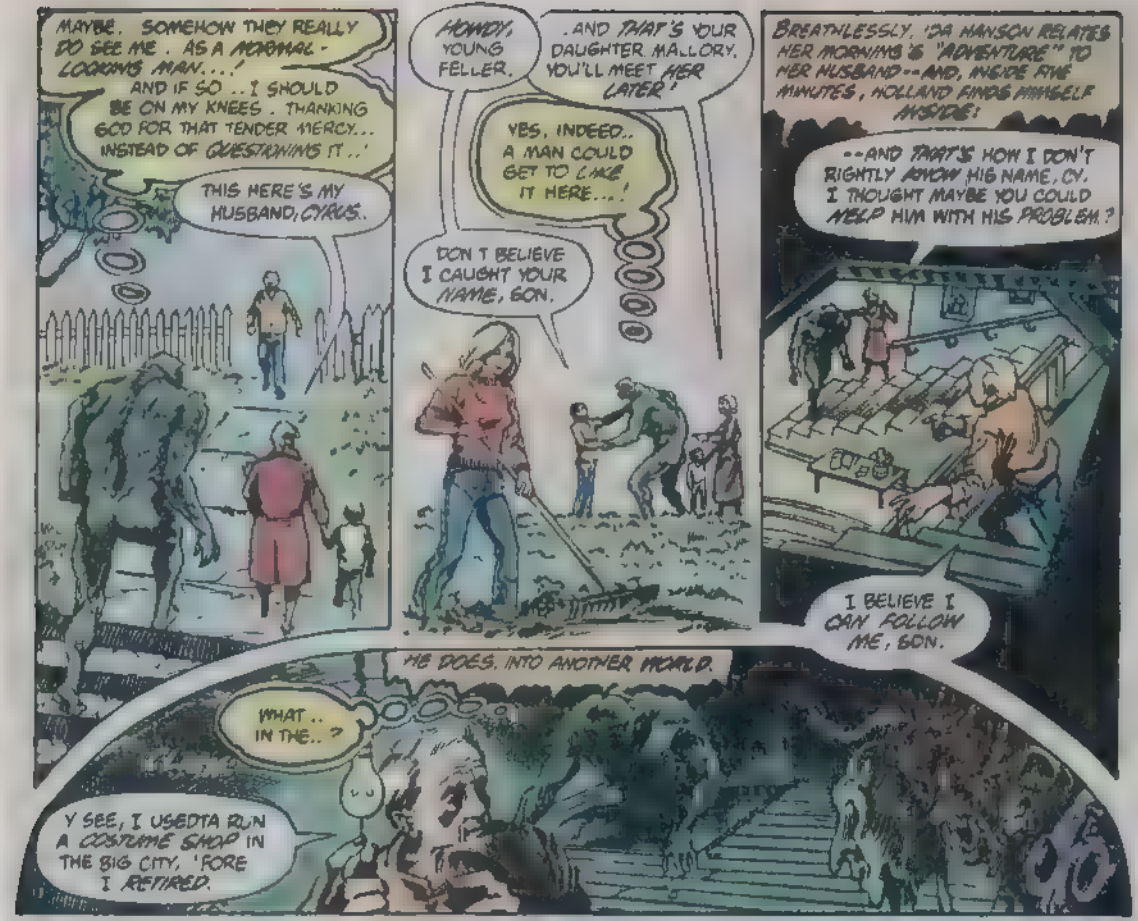

24 HOURS LATER, ALEC HOLLAND PULLS HIMSELF AWAKE AFTER A FITFUL NIGHT SPENT LYING ATOP WHEELS, MUFFLER AND EXHAUST:
SO... CRAMPED... IN HERE...!
GOT TO STRETCH...
MOTELS
...GET SOME... FRESH AIR, AND...
HUH ?!
DAMN...!
WOULDN'T YOU KNOW IT... THAT MAID WOULD HAVE TO SPOT ME...!
EEEE

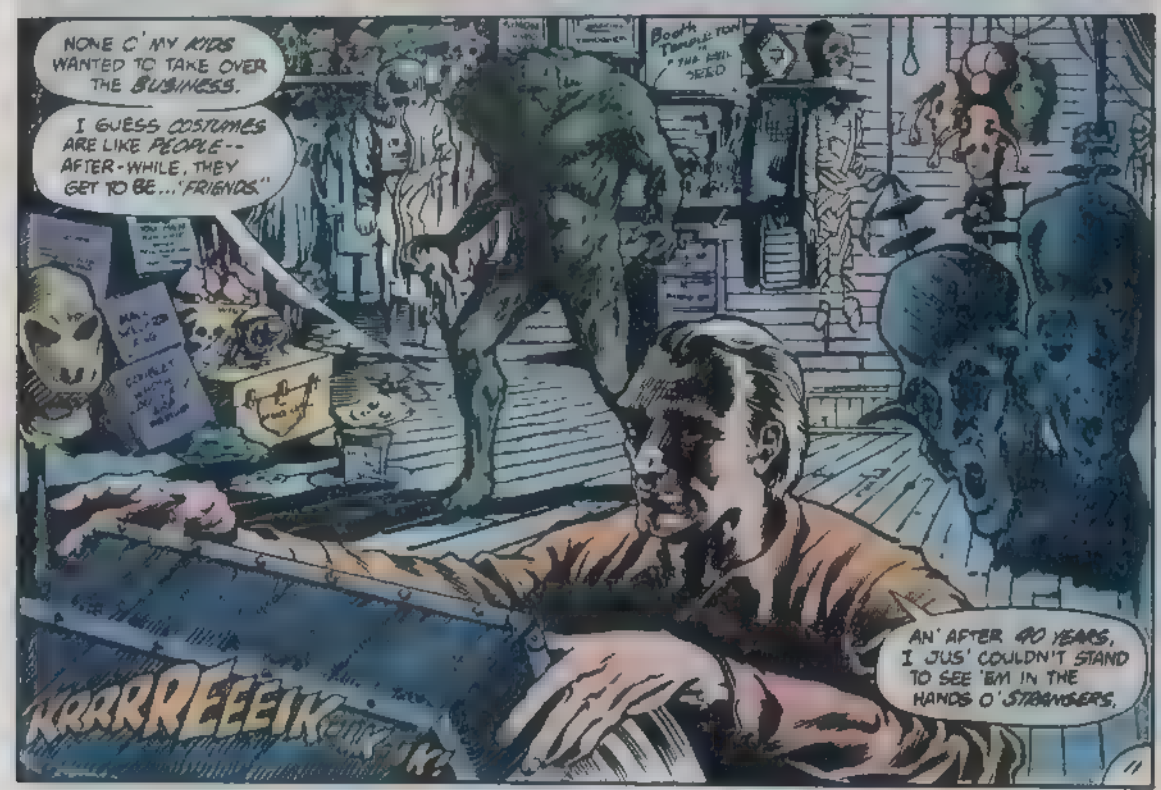

WHY IS IT .. THAT PEOPLE ALWAYS EQUATE UGLINESS... WITH EVIL... AND FEAR IT...
... BEFORE THEY HAVE... ANY REAL REASON TO...?
I SHOULD BE USED TO THAT, TOO, BY NOW... AT LEAST AS IT RELATES TO ME...
NEW MOON MOTEL
VACANCY
...BUT I'M NOT...!
AND I CAN'T KEEP ON FOOLING MYSELF THAT I EVER WILL, EITHER . !
BUT NEITHER CAN I SPEND . THE REST OF MY LIFE . GRIEVING FOR THE HUMANITY I'VE LOST..
AND WHAT I LOST WITH IT: TRUE COMPANIONSHIP..!
EVEN IF LINDA AND SURVIVED... HOW DO I KNOW SHE WOULDN'T BE LIKE THE OTHERS...
...LIKE DENNIS AND LIZ AND MATT AND ABISAIL BEFORE THEM...?
ALWAYS TRYING SO HARD.. TO HIDE THE PITY IN THEIR EYES...
.. AND TRYING HARDER NOT TO SHOW THAT EVEN THEY... ARE REVOLTED BY ME BY MY SIGHT AND SMELL.. '
NO.. I CAN'T KID MYSELF ANY MORE
...THAT ALL IT'LL TAKE FOR ME TO BE AT PEACE... IS TO BE "USEFUL" AGAIN...!
ALL THE USES I'M PUTTING MYSELF TO... ARE SELF-LIMITING...'
SUPPOSE WE DO . ESCAPE FROM THE SUNDERLAND'S SHADOW...
... AND I WILL HELP LIZ AND DENNIS RESUME... NORMAL LIVES..?
WHERE WILL THAT . LEAVE ME...? STILL ALONE...
...BECAUSE I CAN NEVER HAVE.. A "NORMAL" LIFE...! I'M NOT NORMAL.
I'LL NEVER BE ABLE .. TO LIVE A LIFE WORTH LIVING...
. UNTIL I CAN WALK FREELY.. AMONG MY OWN KIND...'
IF I CAN'T BE HUMAN.. I'VE GOT TO FIND A WAY... TO TAKE ON... HUMAN APPEARANCE .. SO I CAN--
EEEEEEEEE
--HUH..?
7


EEEE

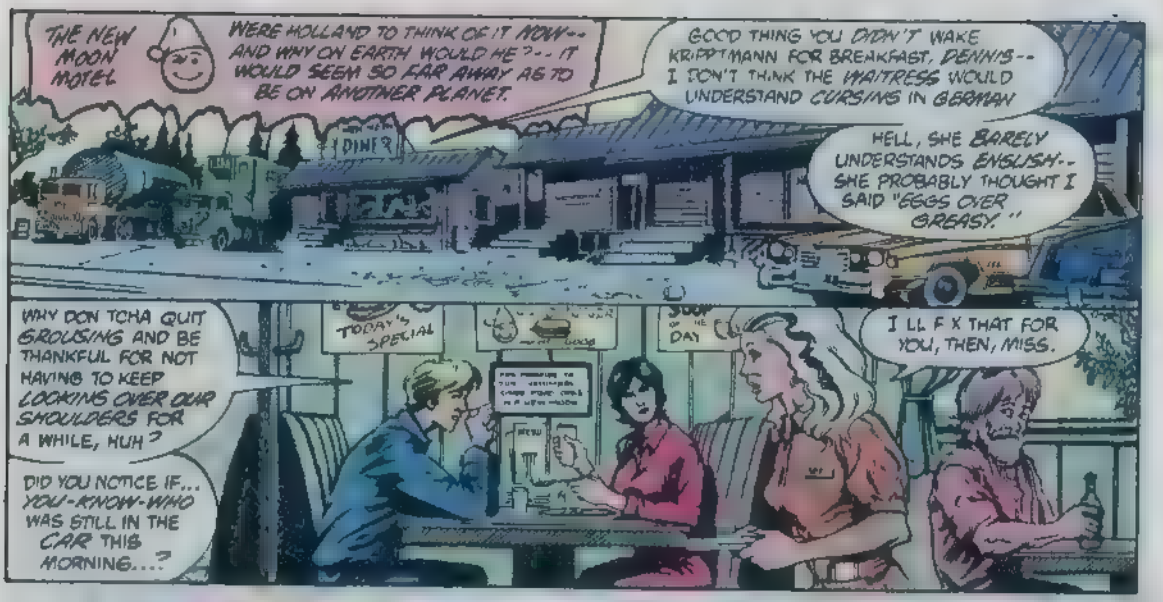
JUMP, KID..!
HE CAN'T MOVE..! DOESN'T KNOW. WHAT HE'S AFRAID OF MORE .. GOING OVER.. OR ME..!
BETTER GRAB HIM. AND TO HELL WITH HIS FEARS..
OR HE WON'T BE ALIVE. TO FEAR ANYTHING..!
HE CAN GET OVER.. HIS AVERSION TO ME... LATER...
... ON SOLID, LEVEL GROUND..!
YOU... YOU SAVED HIS LIFE! HOW CAN I EVER THANK YOU ENOUGH, YOUNG MAN?
I'M IDA HARMON THAT'S JIMMY SPURLOW--HE'S THE NEIGHBORS' BOY--I'M LOOKING AFTER HIM FOR THE DAY.
WHAT'S WRONG WITH THIS WOMAN..?
9


SHE DOESN'T SEEM TO CARE...
THAT SHE'S TALKING TO A..
...MONSTROSITY..!
OR DOESN'T NOTICE..
IF ANYTHING HAD HAPPENED TO HIM
WELL, I DON'T EVEN WANT TO THINK ABOUT THAT! ARE YOU NEW IN TOWN?
I DON'T BELIEVE I KNOW YOU WHAT'S YOUR NAME?
I.. I CAN'T BELIEVE... THIS IS HAPPENING..!
AND EVEN IF SPEECH WERE NOT A SLOW AND DIFFICULT PROCESS FOR HIM, HOLLAND WOULD STILL BE AT A LOSS FOR WORDS.
WHAT'S WRONG? YOU DON'T SEEM SAY... ! UNLESS..
.. YOU CAN'T SPEAK, IS THAT IT? OH, YOU POOR, DEAR BOY-- YOU'RE A MUTE!
THAT'S... CRAZY...! SURELY SHE HEARD ME SHOUT...
BANK
PEAKSVILLE BANKING & LOAN
TIM RILEY'S BAR
TAXI
NEW LIFE
I'D SWEAR... THIS WAS ALL SOME ELABORATE... PRETENSE ON HER PART..
.. EXCEPT NONE OF THE OTHER TOWNSPEOPLE SEEM TO NOTICE ME, EITHER...!
I WOULD'VE THOUGHT... AT LEAST ONE.. WOULD REACT LIKE THAT MAID.. BACK AT THE MOTEL...!
SALE!
WELL NOTHING ABOUT ME.. HAS CHANGED. ! THEN... THERE'S SOMETHING.. UNUSUAL. ABOUT THESE PEOPLE...!
MY HUSBAND AND I RUN A BOARDING HOUSE TWO BLOCKS DOWN.
AT LEAST COME HAVE A NICE HOME-COOKED MEAL WITH US...
. AND MAYBE SPEND THE NIGHT HERE IF YOU'RE JUST PASSING THROUGH-- FREE OF CHARGE, OF COURSE.
IT'S THE LEAST WE CAN DO AFTER YOUR ACT OF BRAVERY TODAY
HOLLAND, MAYBE IT'S YOU... WHO'S ACTING SCREWY..!


MAYBE. SOMEHOW THEY REALLY DO SEE ME. AS A NORMAL-LOOKING MAN...!
AND IF SO ..I SHOULD BE ON MY KNEES. THANKING GOD FOR THAT TENDER MERCY... INSTEAD OF QUESTIONING IT..!
THIS HERE'S MY HUSBAND, CYRUS.
HOWDY, YOUNG FELLER.
..AND THAT'S YOUR DAUGHTER MALLORY. YOU'LL MEET HER LATER!
YES, INDEED.. A MAN COULD GET TO LIKE IT HERE...!
DON'T BELIEVE I CAUGHT YOUR NAME, SON.
BREATHLESSLY, 'DA HANSON RELATES HER MORNING'S "ADVENTURE" TO HER HUSBAND--AND, INSIDE FIVE MINUTES, HOLLAND FINDS HIMSELF INSIDE:
--AND THAT'S HOW I DON'T RIGHTLY KNOW HIS NAME, CY. I THOUGHT MAYBE YOU COULD HELP HIM WITH HIS PROBLEM?
I BELIEVE I CAN FOLLOW ME, SON.
HE DOES, INTO ANOTHER WORLD.
WHAT.. IN THE..?
Y SEE, I USEDTA RUN A COSTUME SHOP IN THE BIG CITY, 'FORE I RETIRED.

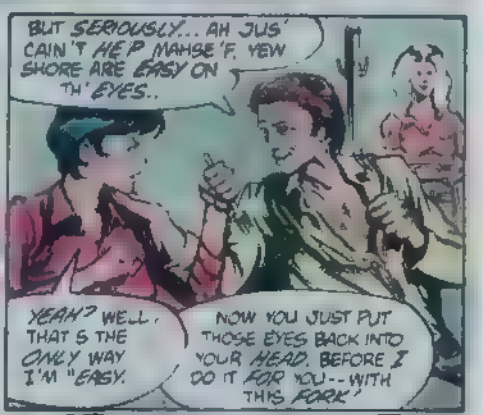

NONE O' MY KIDS WANTED TO TAKE OVER THE BUSINESS.
I GUESS COSTUMES ARE LIKE PEOPLE-- AFTER-WHILE, THEY GET TO BE..."FRIENDS."
AN' AFTER 40 YEARS, I JUS' COULDN'T STAND TO SEE 'EM IN THE HANDS O' STRANGERS.
KRRRREEEIK-IK-IK!

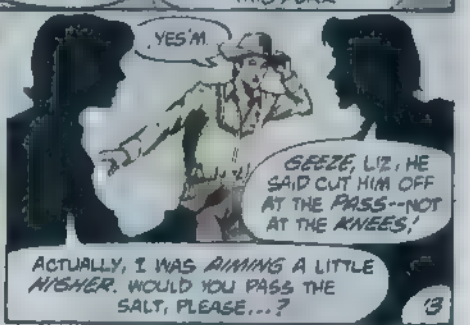
HERE'S WHAT YOU NEED, YOUNG FELLER-- MY LITTLE SECRET:
MASKS FOR THE SOUL.
NOT TO HIDE THE SOUL, MINDJA, BUT TO REVEAL IT--
--MASKS THAT HIDE OR DISGUISE, THE PART OF YOU WHAT SHOWS ON THE OUTSIDE.
...THE PART THAT OFTEN BLINDS PEOPLE TO THE REAL PERSON UNDERNEATH.
BUT WHY... WOULD HE OFFER ME... SUCH A THING..
. UNLESS HE REALLY DOES... SEE ME AS A MONSTER...?
A MASK TO LET TH' TRUTH OF YER SOUL SHINE THROUGH IN ALL ITS BEAUTY...OR OTHERWISE.
HERE, TAKE IT-- IF YOU RE NOT AFRAID.
AFRAID...? NO CYRUS IF YOU RE OFFERING ME . WHAT I THINK YOU ARE I COULDN'T POSSIBLY BE AFRAID...
...AND I'LL TAKE IT.. I'M THROUGH ASKING QUESTIONS...!
THE THING OF GAUZE AND PAPER SETTLES ON WHAT WAS ONCE THE BRIDGE OF ALEC HOLLAND'S NOSE
NOW...
.. STEP OVER TO THIS MIRROR HERE.
HE FEELS NO DIFFERENT SAVE FOR THE HAMMERING OF HIS HEART. IT IS A VERY HUMAN FEELING --
--A DISTANT MEMORY RECAP-TURED.
TELL ME WHAT YOU SEE.
I SEE MY...SELF.
MYSELF.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME, SON?
I'M ALEC... ALEC HOLLAND. OH, DEAR GOD...
...I...AM..ALEC HOLLAND.
12

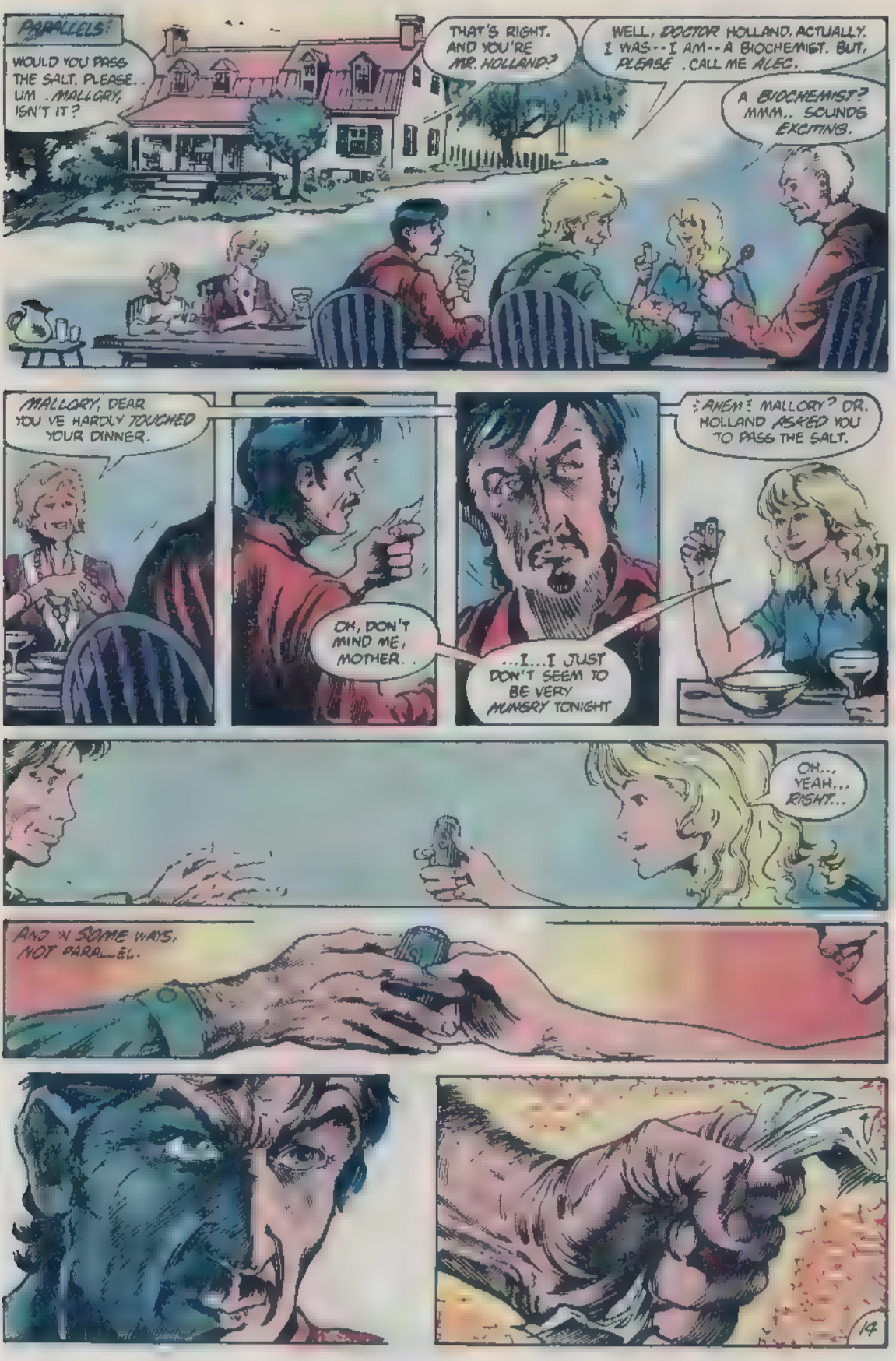

THE NEW MOON MOTEL
WERE HOLLAND TO THINK OF IT NOW-- AND WHY ON EARTH WOULD HE?-- IT WOULD SEEM SO FAR AWAY AS TO BE ON ANOTHER PLANET.
GOOD THING YOU DIDN'T WAKE KRIPPTMANN FOR BREAKFAST, DENNIS-- I DON'T THINK THE WAITRESS WOULD UNDERSTAND CURSING IN GERMAN
HELL, SHE BARELY UNDERSTANDS ENGLISH-- SHE PROBABLY THOUGHT I SAID "EGGS OVER GREASY."
DINER
TODAY'S SPECIAL
SOUP OF THE DAY
MENU
WHY DON TCHA QUIT GROUSING AND BE THANKFUL FOR NOT HAVING TO KEEP LOOKING OVER OUR SHOULDERS FOR A WHILE, HUH?
I'LL FIX THAT FOR YOU, THEN, MISS.
DID YOU NOTICE IF... YOU-KNOW-WHO WAS STILL IN THE CAR THIS MORNING...?

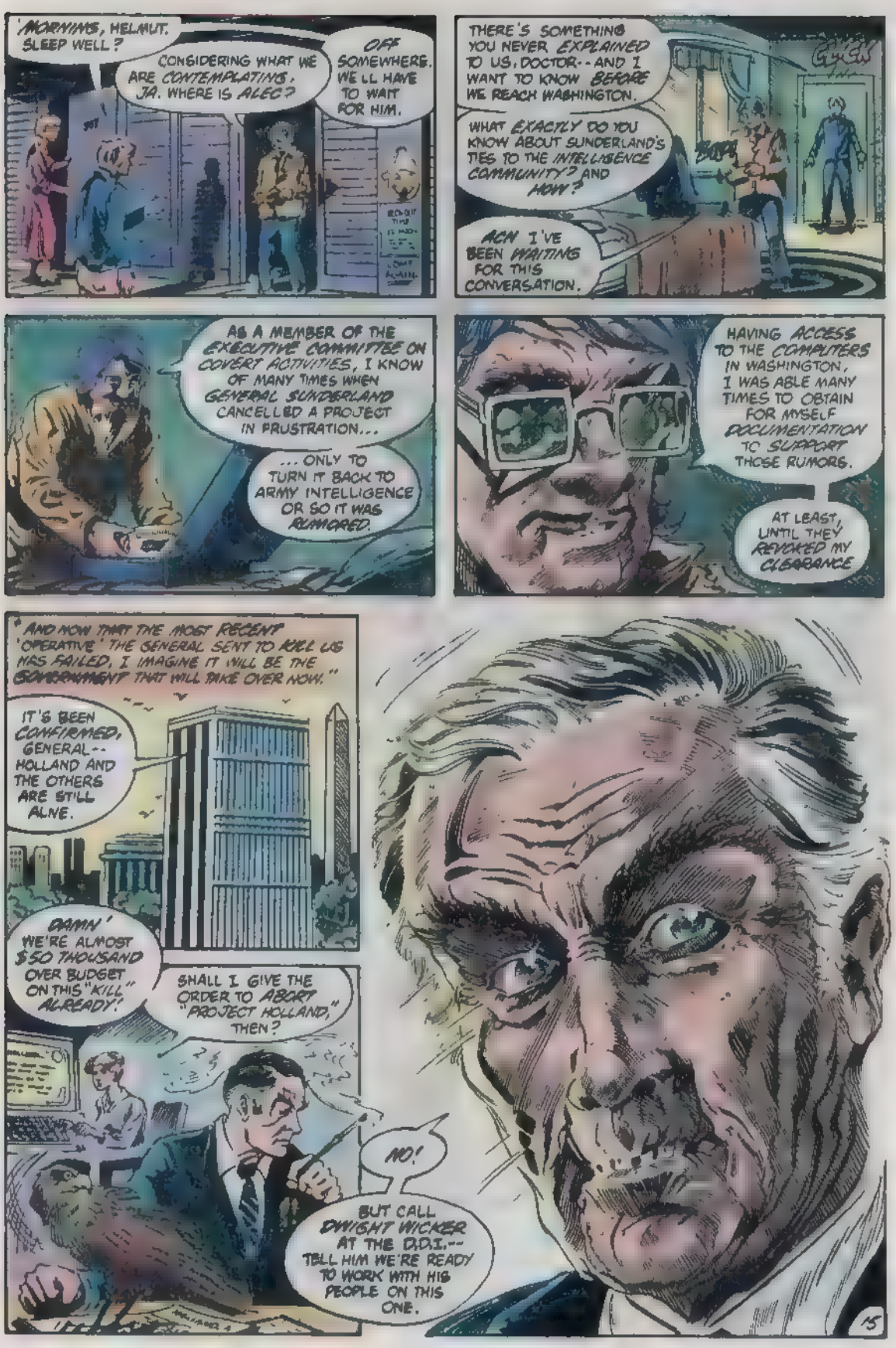
UNH-UH PROBABLY JUST WENT FOR A WALK, THOUGH
NOW THAT WE'RE PRETTY SURE THAT IMMERSING HIMSELF IN THE SWAMP THAT "SPAWNED" HIM HAS RESTORED HIS REGENERATIVE POWERS* HE'S EAGER FOR EXERCISE--
*SOTST #13 --LEN
WELL, HOWDY, MISSY..
...AIN'TCHOO THET LIZ TREMAYNE GAL--FROM "IN-DEPTH MASAZINE"? MAH NAME'S BRANDON--MEC BRANDON. BUT MAH BUDDIES CALL ME "DALLAS"..
WHY DON'T YOU GO POKE A COW OR SOMETHING, MANURE-FACE? CAN'T YOU SEE I'VE GOT COMPANY?
SHOOT, I THOUGHTCHA MAHT WANNA DO A FEATURE ON MUH FAMILY--

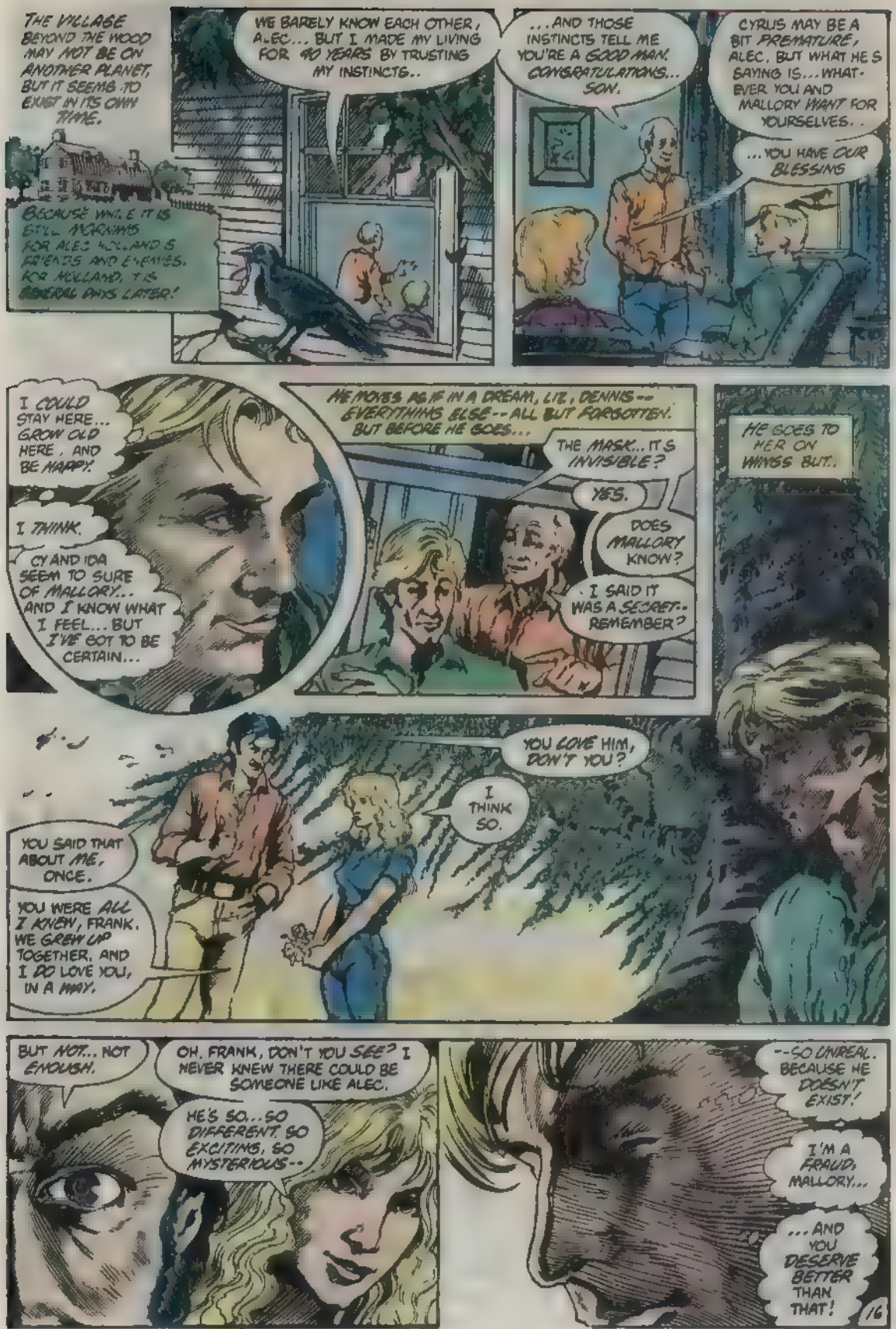
--THEY'RE IN OIL, DON TCHA KNOW.
CRUDE OIL I'M SURE.
:HEH-HEH: YEAH GUESS MEBBE AH AM BEIN A LIL FORWARD IF AH GET OUTTA LINE MA AM YEW JUS HEAD ME OFF AT TH' PASS.
GET IT? "PASS"?

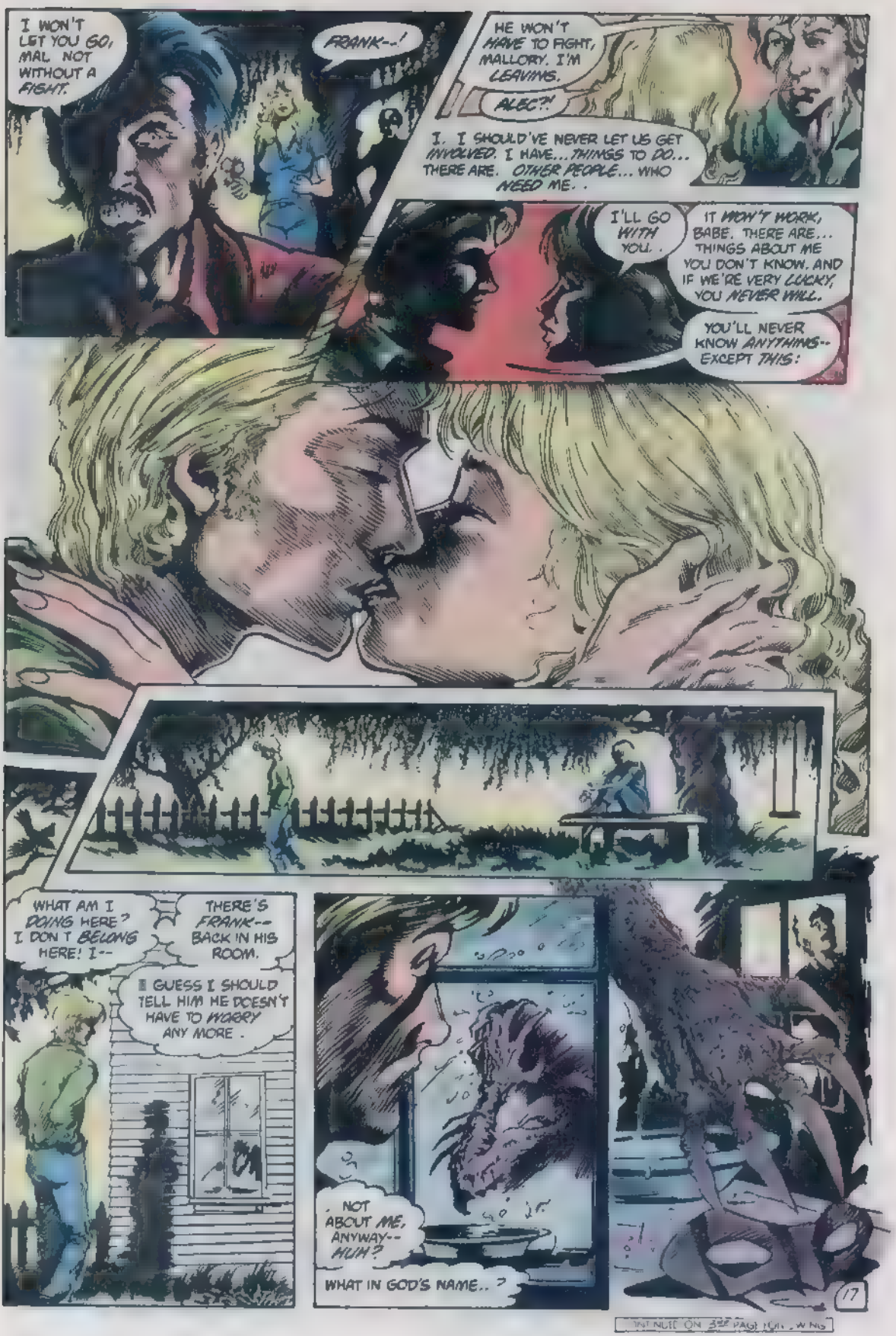

BUT SERIOUSLY... AH JUS' CAIN'T HE'P MAHSE'F. YEW SHORE ARE EASY ON TH' EYES..
YEAH? WELL, THAT'S THE ONLY WAY I'M "EASY."
NOW YOU JUST PUT THOSE EYES BACK INTO YOUR HEAD, BEFORE I DO IT FOR YOU--WITH THIS FORK!


YES'M.
GEEZE, LIZ, HE SAID CUT HIM OFF AT THE PASS--NOT AT THE KNEES!
ACTUALLY, I WAS AIMING A LITTLE HIGHER. WOULD YOU PASS THE SALT, PLEASE...?
13

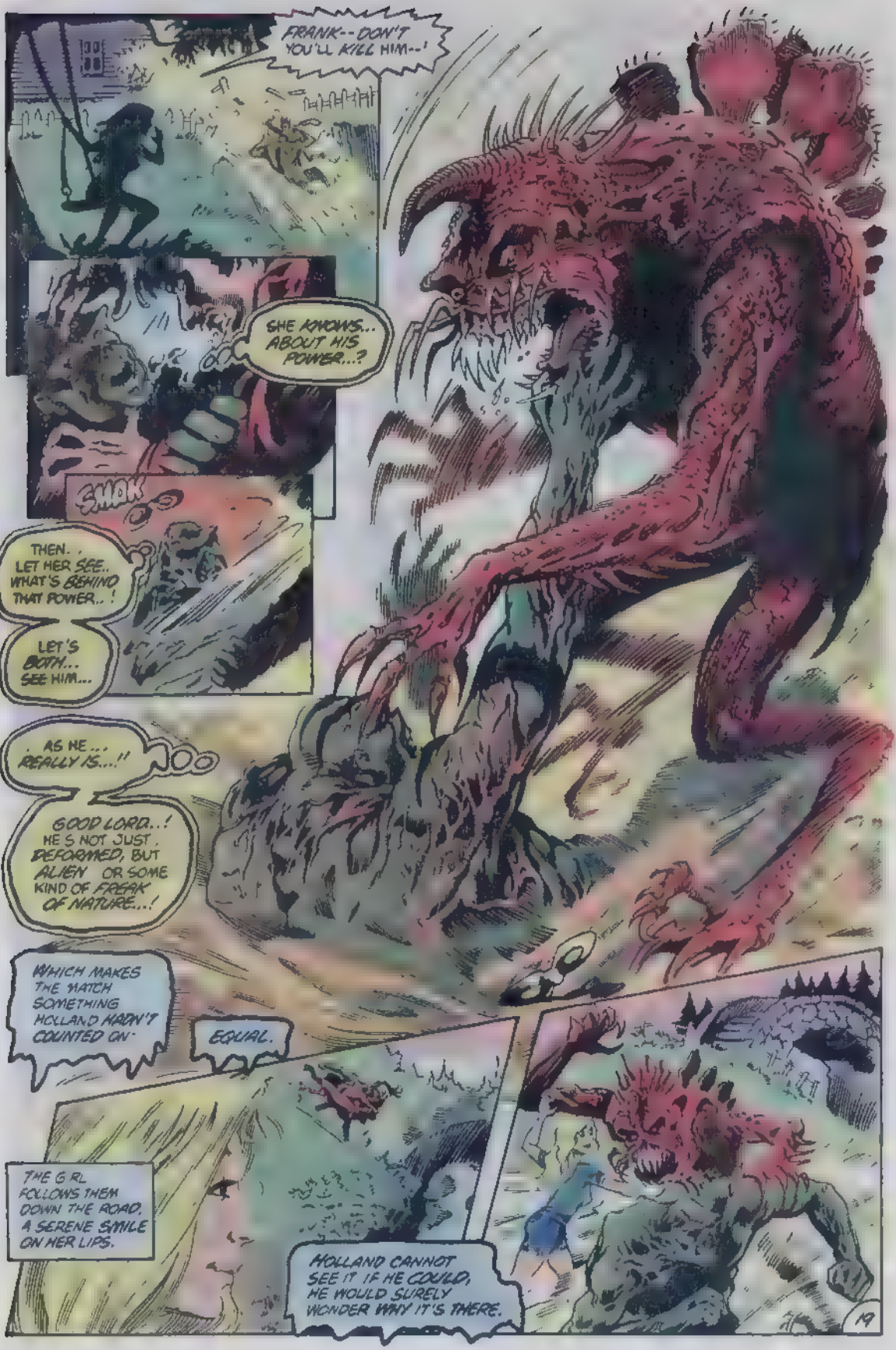

PARALLELS!
WOULD YOU PASS THE SALT, PLEASE.. UM .MALLORY, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S RIGHT. AND YOU'RE MR. HOLLAND?
WELL, DOCTOR HOLLAND, ACTUALLY. I WAS--I AM--A BIOCHEMIST. BUT, PLEASE .CALL ME ALEC.
A BIOCHEMIST? MMM.. SOUNDS EXCITING.
MALLORY, DEAR YOU'VE HARDLY TOUCHED YOUR DINNER.
OH, DON'T MIND ME, MOTHER..
...I...I JUST DON'T SEEM TO BE VERY HUNGRY TONIGHT
:AHEM: MALLORY? DR. HOLLAND ASKED YOU TO PASS THE SALT.
OH... YEAH... RIGHT...
AND IN SOME WAYS, NOT PARA...EL.
14

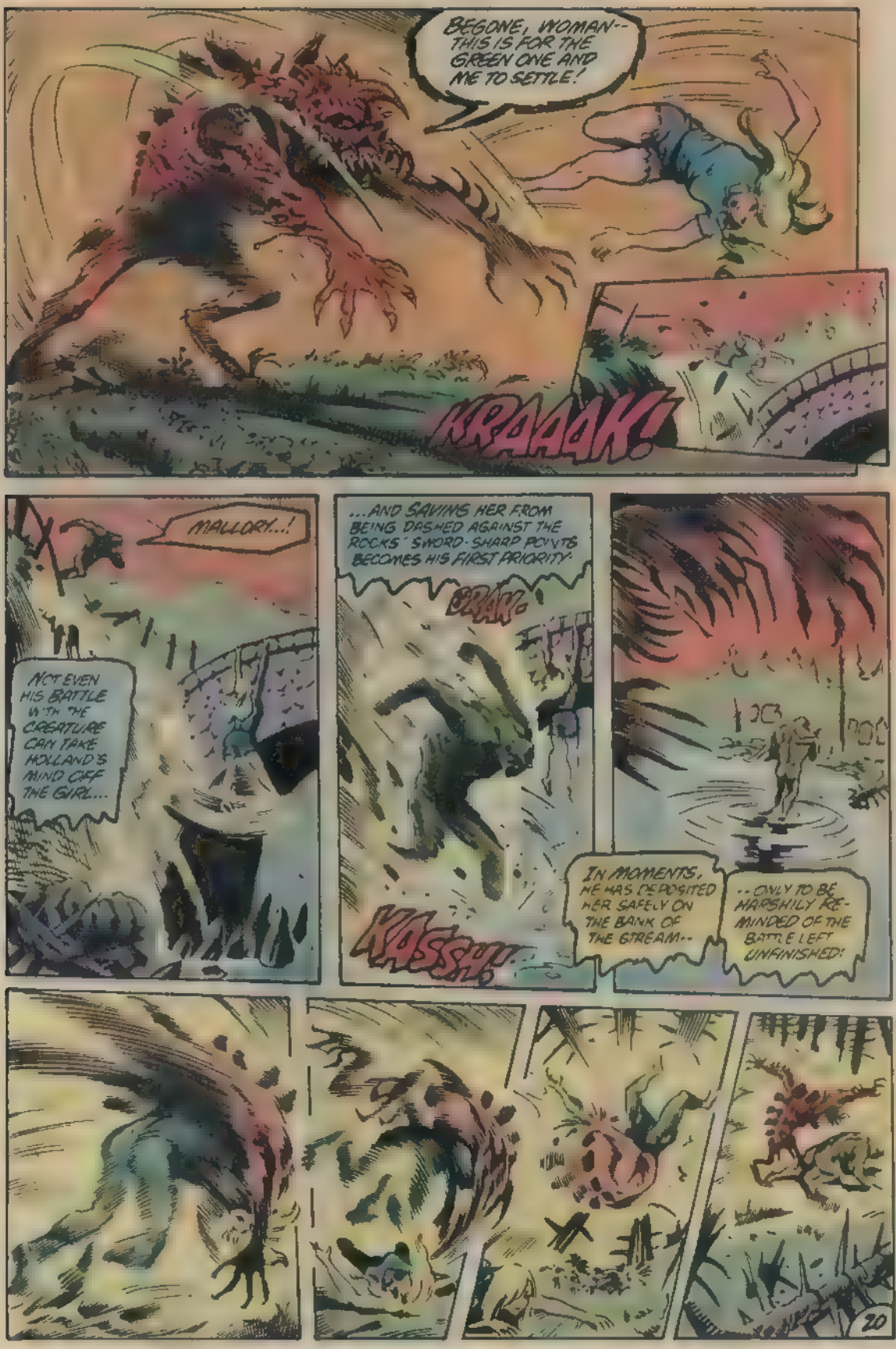

'MORNING, HELMUT. SLEEP WELL?
CONSIDERING WHAT WE ARE CONTEMPLATING. JA. WHERE IS ALEC?
OFF SOMEWHERE. WE'LL HAVE TO WAIT FOR HIM.
THERE'S SOMETHING YOU NEVER EXPLAINED TO US, DOCTOR--AND I WANT TO KNOW BEFORE WE REACH WASHINGTON.
WHAT EXACTLY DO YOU KNOW ABOUT SUNDERLAND'S TIES TO THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY? AND HOW?
ACH I'VE BEEN WAITING FOR THIS CONVERSATION.
AS A MEMBER OF THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE ON COVERT ACTIVITIES, I KNOW OF MANY TIMES WHEN GENERAL SUNDERLAND CANCELLED A PROJECT IN FRUSTRATION...
...ONLY TO TURN IT BACK TO ARMY INTELLIGENCE OR SO IT WAS RUMORED.
HAVING ACCESS TO THE COMPUTERS IN WASHINGTON, I WAS ABLE MANY TIMES TO OBTAIN FOR MYSELF DOCUMENTATION TO SUPPORT THOSE RUMORS.
AT LEAST, UNTIL THEY REVOKED MY CLEARANCE
"AND NOW THAT THE MOST RECENT 'OPERATIVE' THE GENERAL SENT TO KILL US HAS FAILED, I IMAGINE IT WILL BE THE GOVERNMENT THAT WILL TAKE OVER NOW."
IT'S BEEN CONFIRMED, GENERAL--HOLLAND AND THE OTHERS ARE STILL ALIVE.
DAMN! WE'RE ALMOST $50 THOUSAND OVER BUDGET ON THIS "KILL" ALREADY!
SHALL I GIVE THE ORDER TO ABORT "PROJECT HOLLAND," THEN?
NO!
BUT CALL DWIGHT WICKER AT THE D.D.I.--TELL HIM WE'RE READY TO WORK WITH HIS PEOPLE ON THIS ONE.
15


THE VILLAGE BEYOND THE WOOD MAY NOT BE ON ANOTHER PLANET, BUT IT SEEMS TO EXIST IN ITS OWN TIME.
BECAUSE WHILE IT IS STILL MORNING FOR ALEC HOLLAND & FRIENDS AND ENEMIES, FOR HOLLAND, IT IS SEVERAL DAYS LATER!
WE BARELY KNOW EACH OTHER, ALEC... BUT I MADE MY LIVING FOR 40 YEARS BY TRUSTING MY INSTINCTS..
...AND THOSE INSTINCTS TELL ME YOU'RE A GOOD MAN. CONGRATULATIONS... SON.
CYRUS MAY BE A BIT PREMATURE, ALEC, BUT WHAT HE'S SAYING IS... WHATEVER YOU AND MALLORY WANT FOR YOURSELVES..
...YOU HAVE OUR BLESSING
I COULD STAY HERE... GROW OLD HERE, AND BE HAPPY.
I THINK.
CY AND IDA SEEM TO SURE OF MALLORY... AND I KNOW WHAT I FEEL... BUT I'VE GOT TO BE CERTAIN...
HE MOVES AS IF IN A DREAM, LIZ, DENNIS -- EVERYTHING ELSE -- ALL BUT FORGOTTEN. BUT BEFORE HE GOES...
THE MASK... IT'S INVISIBLE?
YES.
DOES MALLORY KNOW?
I SAID IT WAS A SECRET.. REMEMBER?
HE GOES TO HER ON WINGS BUT..
YOU LOVE HIM, DON'T YOU?
I THINK SO.
YOU SAID THAT ABOUT ME, ONCE.
YOU WERE ALL I KNEW, FRANK. WE GREW UP TOGETHER, AND I DO LOVE YOU, IN A WAY.
BUT NOT... NOT ENOUGH.
OH, FRANK, DON'T YOU SEE? I NEVER KNEW THERE COULD BE SOMEONE LIKE ALEC.
HE'S SO... SO DIFFERENT SO EXCITING, SO MYSTERIOUS--
--SO UNREAL. BECAUSE HE DOESN'T EXIST!
I'M A FRAUD, MALLORY...
...AND YOU DESERVE BETTER THAN THAT!
16


I WON'T LET YOU GO, MAL. NOT WITHOUT A FIGHT.
FRANK--!
HE WON'T HAVE TO FIGHT, MALLORY. I'M LEAVING.
ALEC?!
I. I SHOULD'VE NEVER LET US GET INVOLVED. I HAVE... THINGS TO DO... THERE ARE. OTHER PEOPLE... WHO NEED ME. .
I'LL GO WITH YOU. .
IT WON'T WORK, BABE. THERE ARE... THINGS ABOUT ME YOU DON'T KNOW. AND IF WE'RE VERY LUCKY, YOU NEVER WILL.
YOU'LL NEVER KNOW ANYTHING-- EXCEPT THIS:
WHAT AM I DOING HERE? I DON'T BELONG HERE! I--
THERE'S FRANK-- BACK IN HIS ROOM.
I GUESS I SHOULD TELL HIM HE DOESN'T HAVE TO WORRY ANY MORE .
. NOT ABOUT ME, ANYWAY-- HUH?
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME.. ?
17

SO... THERE'S MORE THAN ONE "FRAUD" HERE, ISN'T THERE, FRANK?
I SAW THE MASK, FRANK I KNOW ALL ABOUT IT!
WHAMB
I GAVE HER UP, FRANK--SHE DOESN'T DESERVE ME.
BUT IT LOOKS TO ME LIKE SHE'S TOO GOOD FOR EITHER ONE OF US.
YOU SEE.. I'M JUST LIKE YOU...!
NO...
oooNOooo
KRAMM
GOOD LORD..! FEELS LIKE.. I'VE BEEN HIT. BY A BULLDOZER...!
BRAKASSSH
ARRGGHH
WHAT... IS THIS GUY..?!
8

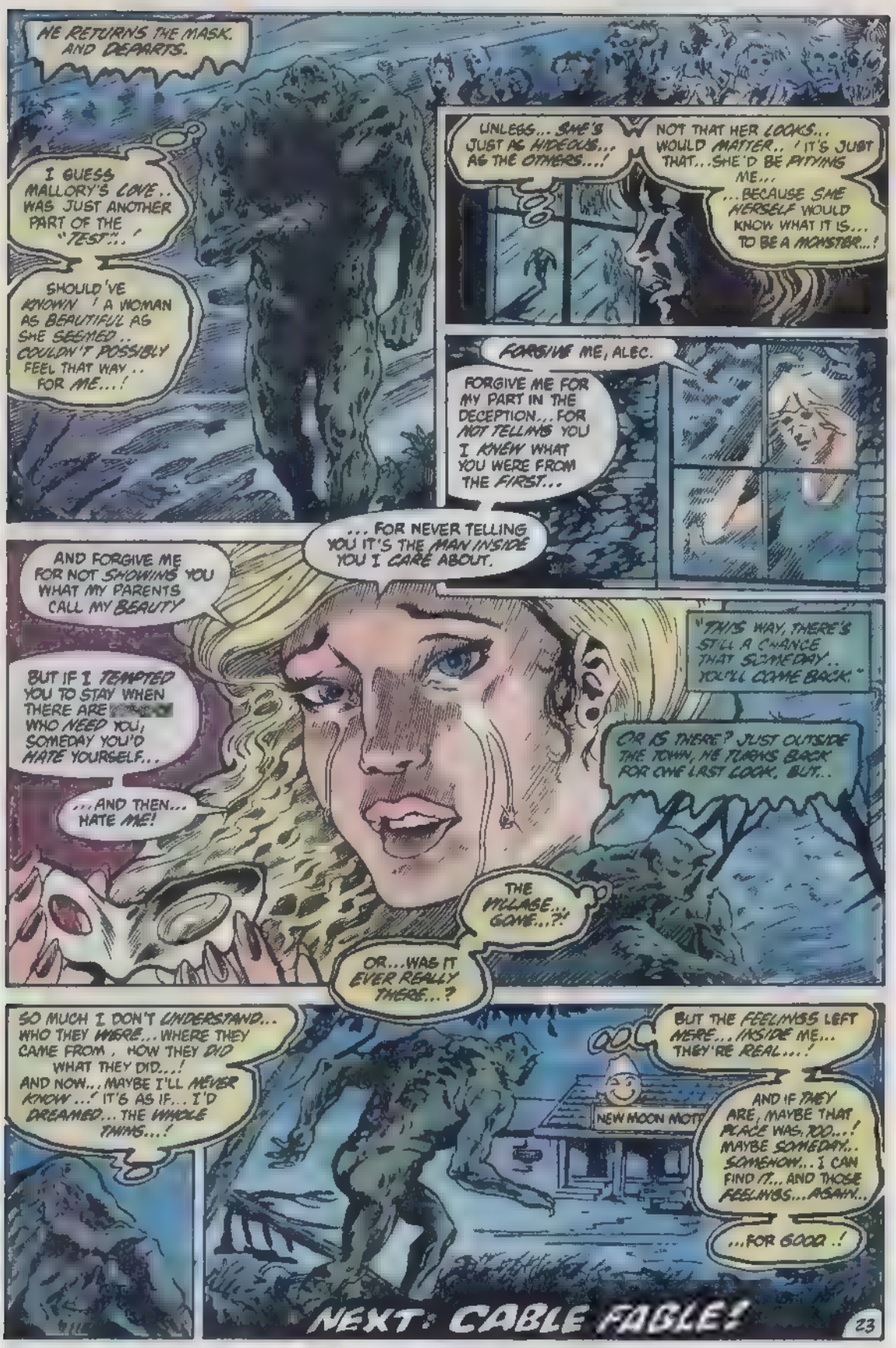

FRANK--DON'T YOU'LL KILL HIM--!
SHE KNOWS.. ABOUT HIS POWER...?
SMOK
THEN., LET HER SEE.. WHAT'S BEHIND THAT POWER..!
LET'S BOTH... SEE HIM...
..AS HE... REALLY IS...!!
GOOD LORD..! HE'S NOT JUST DEFORMED, BUT ALIEN OR SOME KIND OF FREAK OF NATURE...!
WHICH MAKES THE MATCH SOMETHING HOLLAND HADN'T COUNTED ON·
EQUAL.
THE GIRL FOLLOWS THEM DOWN THE ROAD, A SERENE SMILE ON HER LIPS.
HOLLAND CANNOT SEE IT IF HE COULD, HE WOULD SURELY WONDER WHY IT'S THERE.
19


BEGONE, WOMAN--THIS IS FOR THE GREEN ONE AND ME TO SETTLE!
KRAAAK!
MALLORY...!
NOT EVEN HIS BATTLE WITH THE CREATURE CAN TAKE HOLLAND'S MIND OFF THE GIRL...
...AND SAVING HER FROM BEING DASHED AGAINST THE ROCKS' SWORD-SHARP POINTS BECOMES HIS FIRST PRIORITY.
KRAK
KASSH!
IN MOMENTS, HE HAS DEPOSITED HER SAFELY ON THE BANK OF THE STREAM--
--ONLY TO BE HARSHLY REMINDED OF THE BATTLE LEFT UNFINISHED!

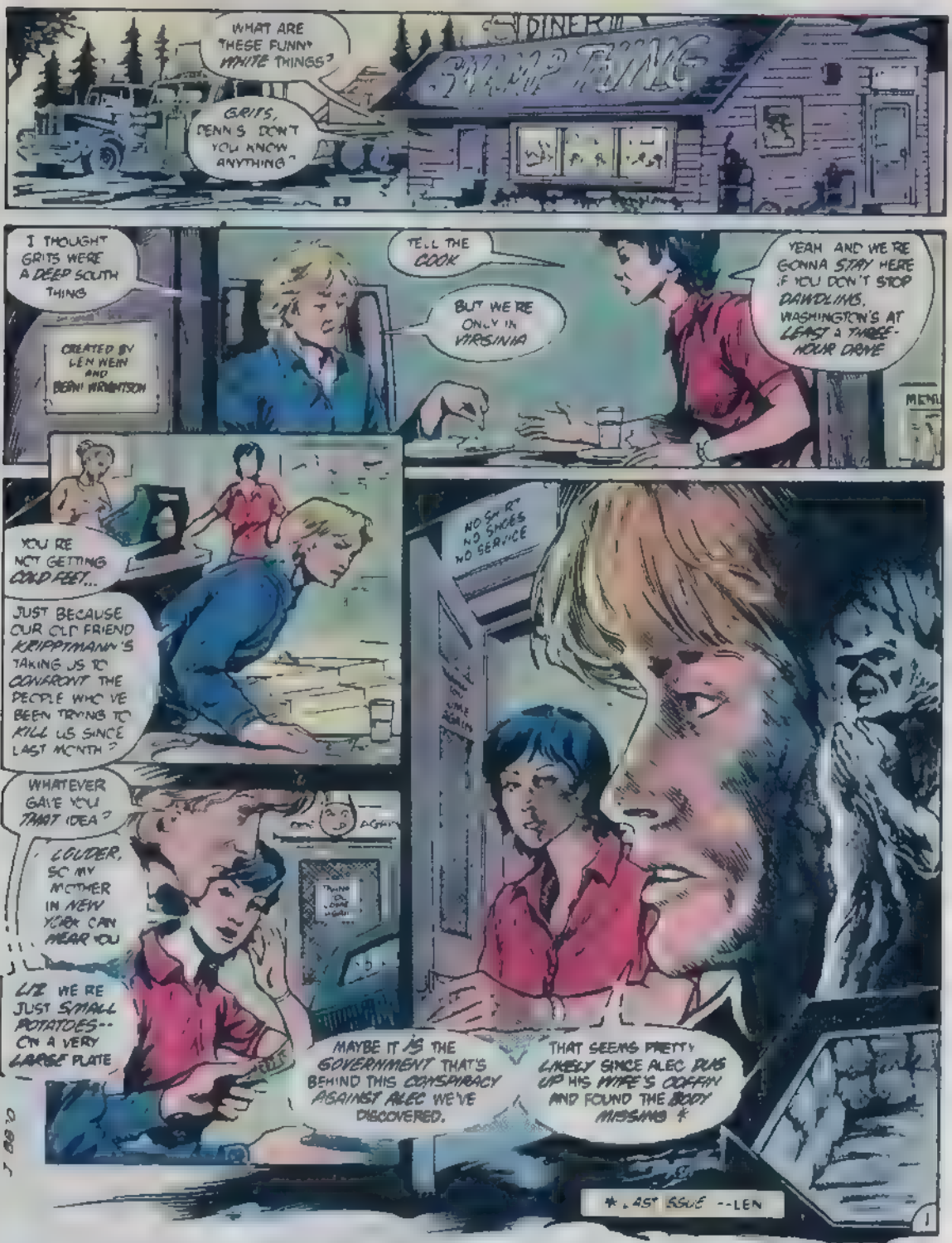
UNFINISHED ONLY UNTIL THE SWAMP THING CAN MARSHALL ONE FINAL BURST OF STRENGTH AGAINST HIS OPPONENT.
YAARRGGH
KRAHH
KRAK
YAAAAAAAAHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH
I...I KILLED HIM...!
I DIDN'T MEAN TO... BUT I TOOK A LIFE... JUST THE SAME...!
GURGLE
KARUNNCH!
I AM...ALEC HOLLAND...! THIS...IS WHAT... I REALLY AM...!
THIS IS WHAT YOUR ALEC IS... MALLORY... A KILLER...! A MONSTROUS KILLER...! WILL YOU BELIEVE... YOU'RE BETTER OFF WITHOUT ME... NOW...?
BRAVO! WELL DONE, ALEC! TRULY AN ACT OF COURAGE!
HUH...?
IN HIS CONFUSION, HOLLAND LOOKS UP...
CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP CLAP
I'LL DISPENSE WITH THE RURAL AFFECTATIONS NOW, ALEC, AND ADDRESS YOU IN MY NORMAL MANNER OF SPEECH.
AS I HINTED EARLIER, AN UGLY BODY DOES NOT NECESSARILY MEAN AN UGLY SPIRIT...
...TO FIND THE TOWNSPEOPLE GATHERED AROUND.
21

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

.. BUT UGLINESS WITHOUT SOMETIMES BREEDS UGLINESS WITHIN-- THE UGLINESS OF SELF-LOATHING, OF SELF-PITY.. OF DENYING THE TRUTH OF ONE'S SELF.
THAT UGLINESS GOES DEEPER THAN THE SKIN. TO THE VERY SOUL.
OBSERVE, ALEC. "FRANK" NEVER REALLY EXISTED-- HE WAS AN ILLUSION.
CALL IT HYPNOSIS, IF YOU WILL--ANOTHER TRICK OF THE MASK.
INDEED, THE ENTIRE DRAMA YOU EXPERIENCED HERE WAS STAGED AS A KIND OF TEST..
... TO DETERMINE IF YOU WERE FIT TO DWELL AMONG US.
FROM THE MOMENT YOU CAME HERE, EVERYONE SAW YOU AS YOU ARE
WE MERELY PRETENDED OTHERWISE.
NOW IT IS TIME FOR YOU TO KNOW OUR TRUTH
YOUR MASK, MALLORY-- REMOVE IT.
NO--NO! I WON'T LET ALEC KNOW THE TRUTH ABOUT ME--!
BUT YOU'RE THE KEY TO THE TEST-- YOURS IS THE MOST IMPORTANT MASK OF ALL--!
LET HER GO, CYRUS. SHE HAS HER REASONS.
OUR OWN FACES ARE ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM UNDERSTAND.
THEY'RE ALL... FREAKS, MUTATIONS .. VICTIMS OF DISFIGUREMENT.
WE LIVE IN PEACE HERE, ALEC--BECAUSE WE ACCEPT OURSELVES.
IN OUR DAILY LIVES, WE HAVE NO NEED OF MASKS
HE TAKES THE MASK, TO BECOME "HUMAN" ONE LAST TIME--SO THAT THE OTHERS MAY HEAR HIM
BUT IF YOU'D CHOSEN TO WEAR YOURS ALWAYS --TRIED TO DECEIVE MALLORY TO KEEP HER LOVING YOU-- YOU WOULD HAVE FAILED THE TEST.
ULTIMATELY, HOWEVER, YOU CHOSE TRUTH. THUS, YOU ARE WELCOME HERE.
I CAN'T ABANDON MY FRIENDS THEY MIGHT DIE IF I'M NOT THERE TO HELP THEM
AND HOW WOULD I BE WORTHY OF YOUR JUDGMENT THEN?
I'M SORRY I CAN'T STAY
22


HE RETURNS THE MASK, AND DEPARTS.
I GUESS MALLORY'S LOVE.. WAS JUST ANOTHER PART OF THE "TEST"...
SHOULD'VE KNOWN ! A WOMAN AS BEAUTIFUL AS SHE SEEMED.. COULDN'T POSSIBLY FEEL THAT WAY.. FOR ME...!
UNLESS... SHE'S JUST AS HIDEOUS... AS THE OTHERS...!
NOT THAT HER LOOKS.. WOULD MATTER.. ! IT'S JUST THAT.. SHE'D BE PITYING ME... ...BECAUSE SHE HERSELF WOULD KNOW WHAT IT IS... TO BE A MONSTER...!
FORGIVE ME, ALEC.
FORGIVE ME FOR MY PART IN THE DECEPTION... FOR NOT TELLING YOU I KNEW WHAT YOU WERE FROM THE FIRST...
... FOR NEVER TELLING YOU IT'S THE MAN INSIDE YOU I CARE ABOUT.
AND FORGIVE ME FOR NOT SHOWING YOU WHAT MY PARENTS CALL MY BEAUTY
BUT IF I TEMPTED YOU TO STAY WHEN THERE ARE [redacted] WHO NEED YOU, SOMEDAY YOU'D HATE YOURSELF...
...AND THEN... HATE ME!
"THIS WAY, THERE'S STILL A CHANCE THAT SOMEDAY... YOU'LL COME BACK."
OR IS THERE? JUST OUTSIDE THE TOWN, HE TURNS BACK FOR ONE LAST LOOK. BUT..
THE VILLAGE... GONE...?!
OR...WAS IT EVER REALLY THERE...?
SO MUCH I DON'T UNDERSTAND... WHO THEY WERE... WHERE THEY CAME FROM , HOW THEY DID WHAT THEY DID...! AND NOW... MAYBE I'LL NEVER KNOW ...! IT'S AS IF... I'D DREAMED... THE WHOLE THING...!
BUT THE FEELINGS LEFT HERE... INSIDE ME... THEY'RE REAL...!
NEW MOON MOTEL
AND IF THEY ARE, MAYBE THAT PLACE WAS, TOO...! MAYBE SOMEDAY.. SOMEHOW... I CAN FIND IT... AND THOSE FEELINGS... AGAIN...
...FOR GOOD .!
NEXT: CABLE FABLE!

The SAGA of the
SWAMP
THING
ALL NEW!
60¢
NO. 17
OCT.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
T. Yates
& Bissette


WHAT ARE THESE FUNNY WHITE THINGS?
GRITS, DENNIS DON'T YOU KNOW ANYTHING?
DINER
SWAMP THING
I THOUGHT GRITS WERE A DEEP SOUTH THING
CREATED BY LEN WEIN AND BERNI WRIGHTSON
TELL THE COOK
BUT WE'RE ONLY IN VIRGINIA
YEAH AND WE'RE GONNA STAY HERE IF YOU DON'T STOP DAWDLING, WASHINGTON'S AT LEAST A THREE-HOUR DRIVE
MENU
YOU'RE NOT GETTING COLD FEET...
JUST BECAUSE OUR OLD FRIEND KRIPPTMANN'S TAKING US TO CONFRONT THE PEOPLE WHO'VE BEEN TRYING TO KILL US SINCE LAST MONTH?
NO SHIRT NO SHOES NO SERVICE
WHATEVER GAVE YOU THAT IDEA?
LOUDER, SO MY MOTHER IN NEW YORK CAN HEAR YOU
LIZ WE'RE JUST SMALL POTATOES-- ON A VERY LARGE PLATE
MAYBE IT IS THE GOVERNMENT THAT'S BEHIND THIS CONSPIRACY AGAINST ALEC WE'VE DISCOVERED.
THAT SEEMS PRETTY LIKELY SINCE ALEC DUG UP HIS WIFE'S COFFIN AND FOUND THE BODY MISSING *
* LAST ISSUE --LEN

THE SAGA OF SWAMP THING Vol. 2 No. 17 October 1983 Published monthly by DC COMICS INC 666 Fifth Avenue New York, N.Y. 10103 Copyright © 1983 by DC Comics Inc. All Rights Reserved. The stories, characters and incidents mentioned in this magazine are entirely fictional. No actual persons, living or dead, are intended or should be inferred. Printed in U.S.A.

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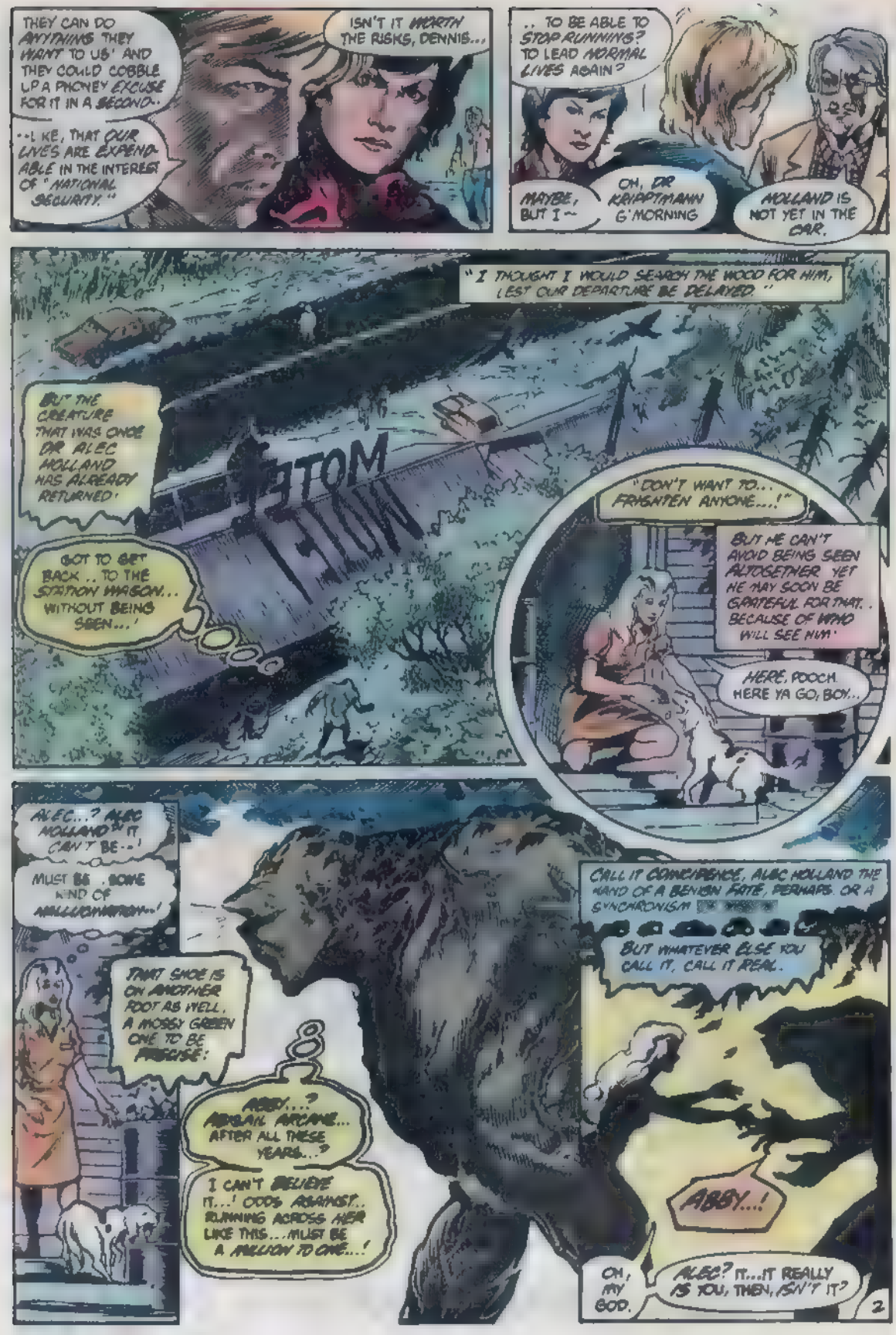
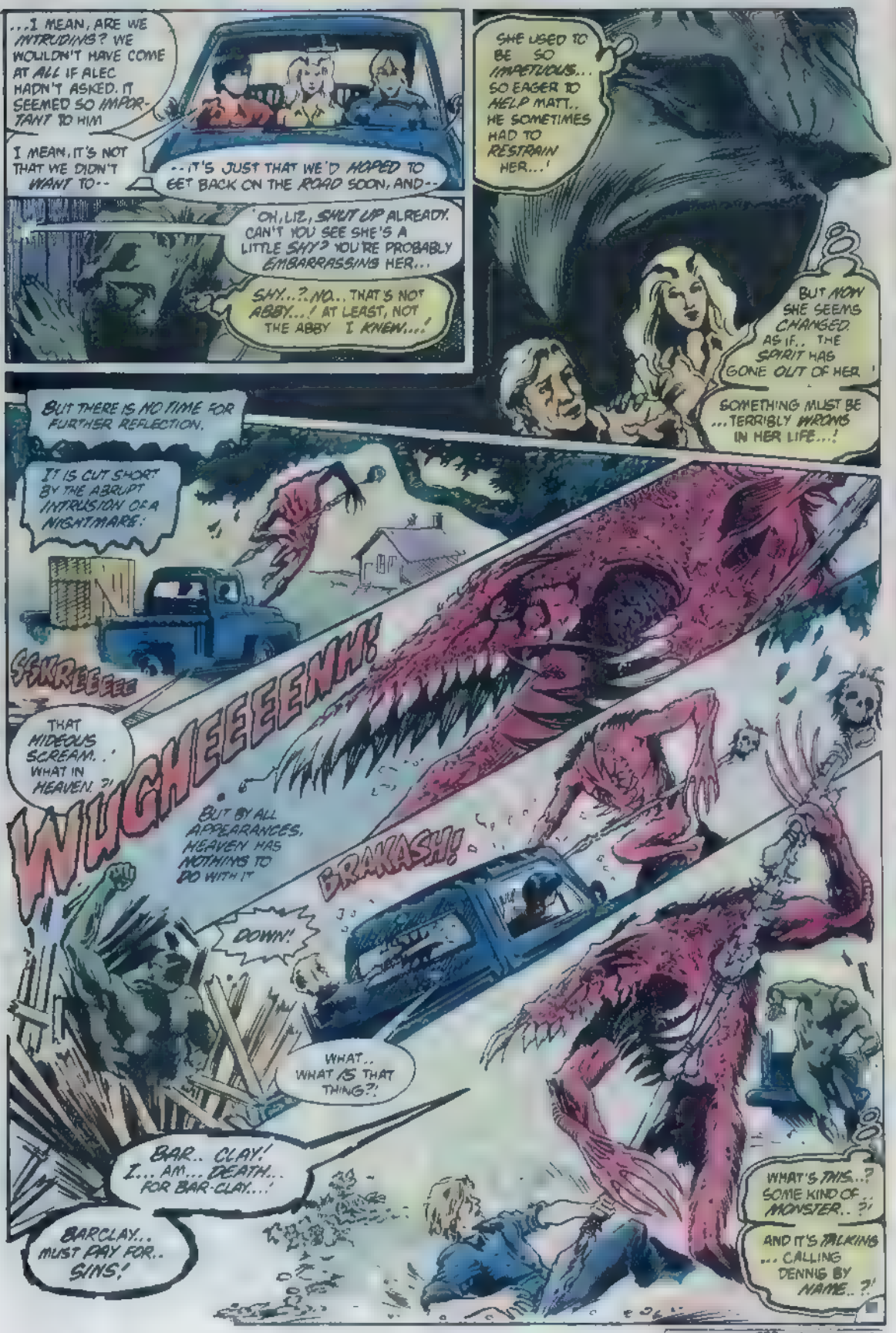
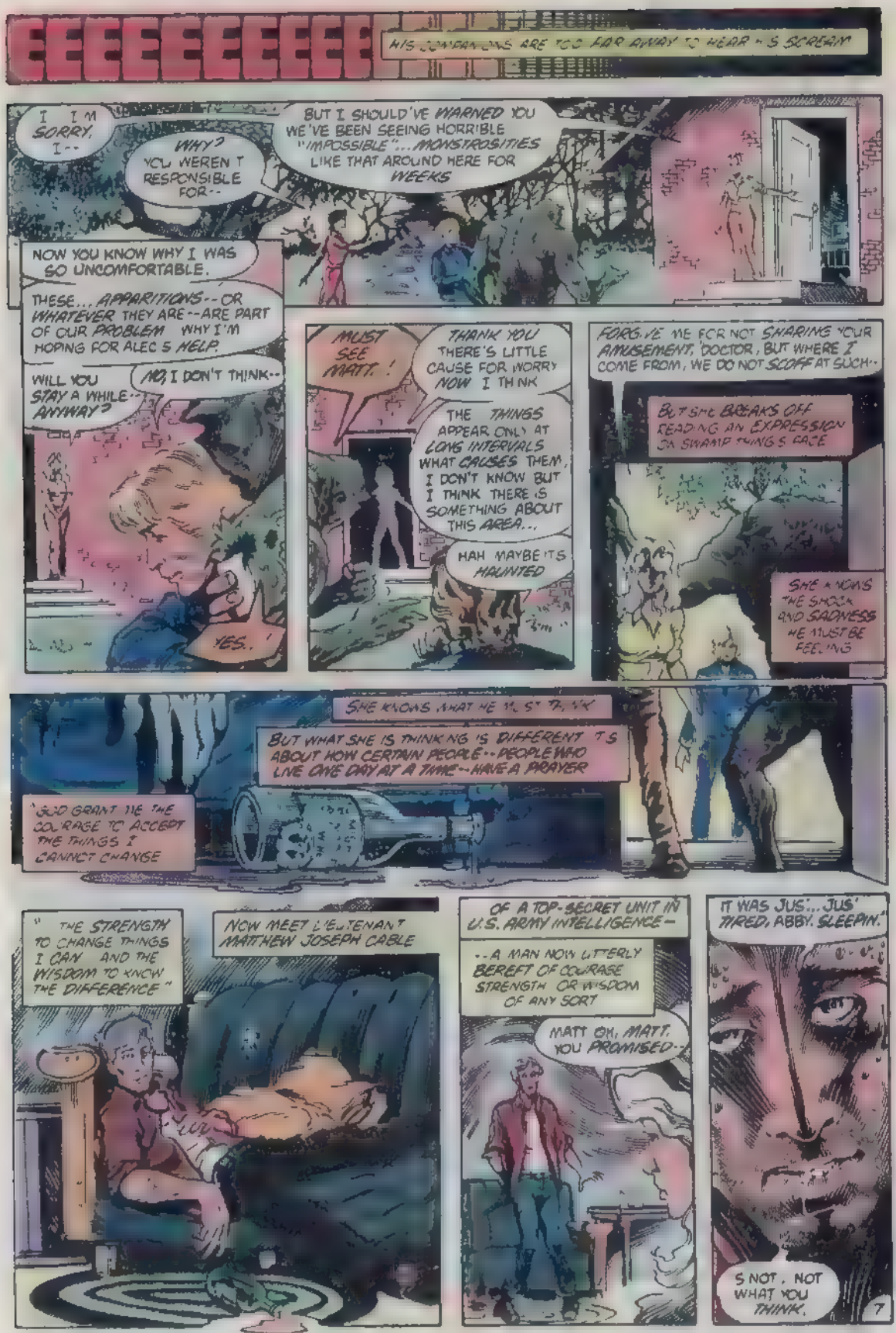

THEY CAN DO ANYTHING THEY WANT TO US' AND THEY COULD COBBLE UP A PHONEY EXCUSE FOR IT IN A SECOND..
..LIKE, THAT OUR LIVES ARE EXPENDABLE IN THE INTEREST OF "NATIONAL SECURITY."
ISN'T IT WORTH THE RISKS, DENNIS...
.. TO BE ABLE TO STOP RUNNING? TO LEAD NORMAL LIVES AGAIN?
MAYBE, BUT I--
OH, DR KRIPPTMANN G'MORNING
HOLLAND IS NOT YET IN THE CAR.
"I THOUGHT I WOULD SEARCH THE WOOD FOR HIM, LEST OUR DEPARTURE BE DELAYED."
BUT THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR ALEC HOLLAND HAS ALREADY RETURNED!
GOT TO GET BACK .. TO THE STATION WAGON... WITHOUT BEING SEEN...!
SWAMP THING
"I DON'T WANT TO... FRIGHTEN ANYONE....!"
BUT HE CAN'T AVOID BEING SEEN ALTOGETHER YET HE MAY SOON BE GRATEFUL FOR THAT.. BECAUSE OF WHO WILL SEE HIM!
HERE, POOCH. HERE YA GO, BOY...
ALEC...? ALEC HOLLAND?! IT CAN'T BE--!
MUST BE .SOME KIND OF HALLUCINATION...!
THAT SHOE IS ON ANOTHER FOOT AS WELL. A MOSSY GREEN ONE TO BE PRECISE:
ABBY...? ABIGAIL ARCANE... AFTER ALL THESE YEARS...?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...! ODDS AGAINST.. RUNNING ACROSS HER LIKE THIS... MUST BE A MILLION TO ONE...!
CALL IT COINCIDENCE, ALEC HOLLAND THE HAND OF A BENIGN FATE, PERHAPS. OR A SYNCHRONISM
BUT WHATEVER ELSE YOU CALL IT, CALL IT REAL.
ABBY...!
OH, MY GOD.
ALEC? IT...IT REALLY IS YOU, THEN, ISN'T IT?
2

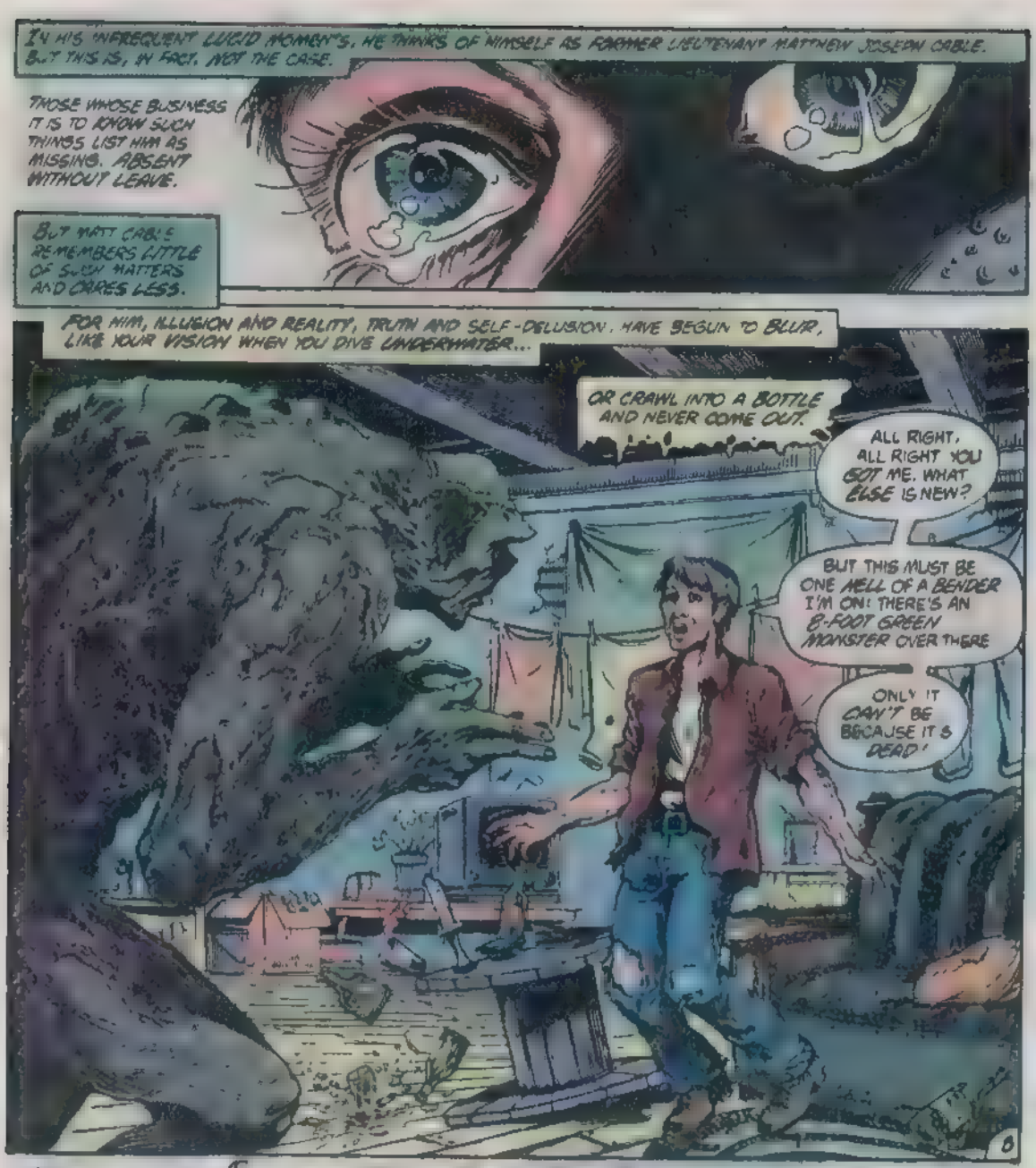
THEY DUCK INTO A STOREROOM THE SIGHT AND SMELL OF HIM IN CLOSE QUARTERS MAKES HIS REALITY UNDENIABLE.
IT'S BEEN SO LONG... WE--I THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD, ALEC.
THERE'S SO MUCH WE HAVE TO TELL EACH OTHER.
LET'S GO. I LIVE NEARBY. THERE'S SOMEONE THERE I THINK WOULD WANT TO SEE YOU. HE NEEDS TO SEE YOU, ALEC.
MAYBE. MAYBE IT WOULD HELP HIM BELIEVE HE ISN'T GOING CRAZY
I DON'T MEAN TO BE CRYPTIC. YOU'LL UNDERSTAND EVERYTHING WHEN YOU SEE HIM AGAIN
'AGAIN'..?
WHO..?
MY HUSBAND
NOBODY KNOWS ME AS ABIGAIL ARCANE ANY MORE IN FACT, I MAKE SURE MOST PEOPLE DON'T KNOW ME AS ANYTHING. EXCEPT JUST PLAIN ABBY,
I CAN'T GIVE THEM MY FULL NAME BUT IF I COULD..
.. IT'D BE MRS. CABLE.
MRS. MATTHEW CABLE
WE CAN LOAD YOU ONTO MY PICK-UP IN THIS EMPTY CRATE
ABBY...! OTHERS.. WITH ME...!
SLOWLY... HALTINGLY. THE BURBLING RASP THAT IS HOLLAND'S ERSATZ VOICE SPEAKS OF HIS NEWFOUND FRIENDS, AND ASKS HER TO FETCH THEM FROM THE MOTEL.
THUS, WITHIN THE HOUR, DENNIS AND LIZ HAVE JOINED THEM THOUGH RELUCTANTLY.
SOMETHING WRONG, ABBY? YOU'RE SO QUIET.
IS IT US..?
3


...I MEAN, ARE WE INTRUDING? WE WOULDN'T HAVE COME AT ALL IF ALEC HADN'T ASKED. IT SEEMED SO IMPORTANT TO HIM
I MEAN, IT'S NOT THAT WE DIDN'T WANT TO--
--IT'S JUST THAT WE'D HOPED TO GET BACK ON THE ROAD SOON, AND--
OH, LIZ, SHUT UP ALREADY. CAN'T YOU SEE SHE'S A LITTLE SHY? YOU'RE PROBABLY EMBARRASSING HER...
SHY...?. NO.. THAT'S NOT ABBY...! AT LEAST, NOT THE ABBY I KNEW...!
SHE USED TO BE SO IMPETUOUS... SO EAGER TO HELP MATT.. HE SOMETIMES HAD TO RESTRAIN HER...!
BUT NOW SHE SEEMS CHANGED. AS IF.. THE SPIRIT HAS GONE OUT OF HER.
SOMETHING MUST BE ...TERRIBLY WRONG IN HER LIFE...!
BUT THERE IS NO TIME FOR FURTHER REFLECTION.
IT IS CUT SHORT BY THE ABRUPT INTRUSION OF A NIGHTMARE:
SFKREEEEE
WUGHEEEENH!
THAT HIDEOUS SCREAM.. WHAT IN HEAVEN...?!
BUT BY ALL APPEARANCES, HEAVEN HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH IT
BRAKASH!
DOWN!
WHAT.. WHAT IS THAT THING?!
BAR.. CLAY! I... AM... DEATH... FOR BAR-CLAY...!
BARCLAY.. MUST PAY FOR.. SINS!
WHAT'S THIS...? SOME KIND OF.. MONSTER..?!
AND IT'S TALKING ... CALLING DENNIS BY NAME..?!

IT'S AS IF IT'S CARRYING ON SOME KIND OF VENDETTA..! BUT THAT'S, INSANE..!
IF I STOP, TO PUZZLE OVER IT NOW, THOUGH,
...THAT THING'LL TURN DENNIS.. INTO SHISH-KEBAB...!
THWACK
END OVER END, THE THING FROM THE SWAMP AND THE THING FROM SOMEONE'S NIGHTMARE TUMBLE ACROSS THE YARD--
--UNTIL, FINALLY...
NOW HOLLAND HAS THE MEASURE OF HIS ANTAGONIST,
AND BELIEVES HE KNOWS WHAT MEASURES WILL BE NECESSARY TO OVERCOME IT.
A BELIEF THAT PROVES FLEETING.
HOLLAND CAN ONLY BLINK IN MUTE ASTONISHMENT AT WHAT HE SEES--
5

CO THINKS HE SEES FOR T HAPPENS SO FAST, HE CAN T BE CERTAIN
EITHER I MISSED ,, OR THE TRUCK WENT RIGHT.. THROUGH THAT THING
AGAIN, THERE IS NO TIME FOR PONDERING.
INSTANTLY, THE H DEOUS THING IS UPON HIM!
UNLESS... IT'S SOME KIND OF CANNIBAL... EATS... OTHER HUMANOIDS...?!
FOR IT RECOILS IN HORROR AND DISGUST AT WHAT IT TASTES AND RELEASES HOLLAND.. ONLY TO SEIZE HIM ANEW!
IT THEN REVEALS A POWER HOLLAND HAD NOT SUSPECTED
TAKING A BITE OUT OF ME ODD METHOD OF ATTACK FOR A HUMANOID...!
BUT IF THE CREATURE HAD INTENDED TO MAKE A MEAL OF HOLLAND, IT IS APPARENTLY NOT HERB-IVOROUS...
AS IT HURLS HIM BODILY SOME TWENTY FEET.
EVEN AS HE HITS A SMALL WOODEN STRUCTURE BROADSIDE, HE CAN SEE THAT THE CREATURE IS SLIPPING AWAY
..BUT ALSO THAT HIS FRIENDS ARE UNHARMED.
THE SAME CAN BE SAID OF HIS THIRD ALLY, SEVERAL MILES DISTANT -- BUT THAT WILL CHANGE MOMENTARILY
NOT A GOOD IDEA, HERR DOKTOR, VENTURING HERE WITHOUT COMPASS OR GUIDE. EMBARRASSMENT THOUGH IT MAY BE YOU ARE LOST..
EH? WAS IST..? SOUNDS LIKE A HELICOPTER..?
A SIGHT BOTH FASCINATING AND TERRIFYING GREETS KRIPPMANN WHEN HE STARE SKYWARD
MORE THAN REASON ENOUGH FOR OVER-LOOKING THE BIZARRE TRAP IN HIS PATH HALF-CONCEALED BY THE UNDERBRUSH.
6


EEEEEEEEEEE
HIS COMPANIONS ARE TOO FAR AWAY TO HEAR HIS SCREAM
I I'M SORRY, I--
WHY? YOU WEREN'T RESPONSIBLE FOR--
BUT I SHOULD'VE WARNED YOU WE'VE BEEN SEEING HORRIBLE "IMPOSSIBLE"... MONSTROSITIES LIKE THAT AROUND HERE FOR WEEKS
NOW YOU KNOW WHY I WAS SO UNCOMFORTABLE.
THESE... APPARITIONS -- OR WHATEVER THEY ARE -- ARE PART OF OUR PROBLEM WHY I'M HOPING FOR ALEC'S HELP.
WILL YOU STAY A WHILE... ANYWAY?
NO, I DON'T THINK--
YES.
MUST SEE MATT.!
THANK YOU THERE'S LITTLE CAUSE FOR WORRY NOW I THINK
THE THINGS APPEAR ONLY AT LONG INTERVALS WHAT CAUSES THEM, I DON'T KNOW BUT I THINK THERE'S SOMETHING ABOUT THIS AREA...
HAH MAYBE IT'S HAUNTED
FORGIVE ME FOR NOT SHARING YOUR AMUSEMENT, DOCTOR, BUT WHERE I COME FROM, WE DO NOT SCOFF AT SUCH--
BUT SHE BREAKS OFF READING AN EXPRESSION ON SWAMP THING'S FACE
SHE KNOWS THE SHOCK AND SADNESS HE MUST BE FEELING
SHE KNOWS WHAT HE MUST THINK
BUT WHAT SHE IS THINKING IS DIFFERENT IT IS ABOUT HOW CERTAIN PEOPLE -- PEOPLE WHO LIVE ONE DAY AT A TIME -- HAVE A PRAYER
"GOD GRANT ME THE COURAGE TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I CANNOT CHANGE
"THE STRENGTH TO CHANGE THINGS I CAN AND THE WISDOM TO KNOW THE DIFFERENCE"
NOW MEET LIEUTENANT MATTHEW JOSEPH CABLE
OF A TOP-SECRET UNIT IN U.S. ARMY INTELLIGENCE--
--A MAN NOW UTTERLY BEREFT OF COURAGE STRENGTH OR WISDOM OF ANY SORT
MATT OH, MATT, YOU PROMISED--
IT WAS JUS'... JUS' TIRED, ABBY. SLEEPIN'.
S NOT. NOT WHAT YOU THINK.
7

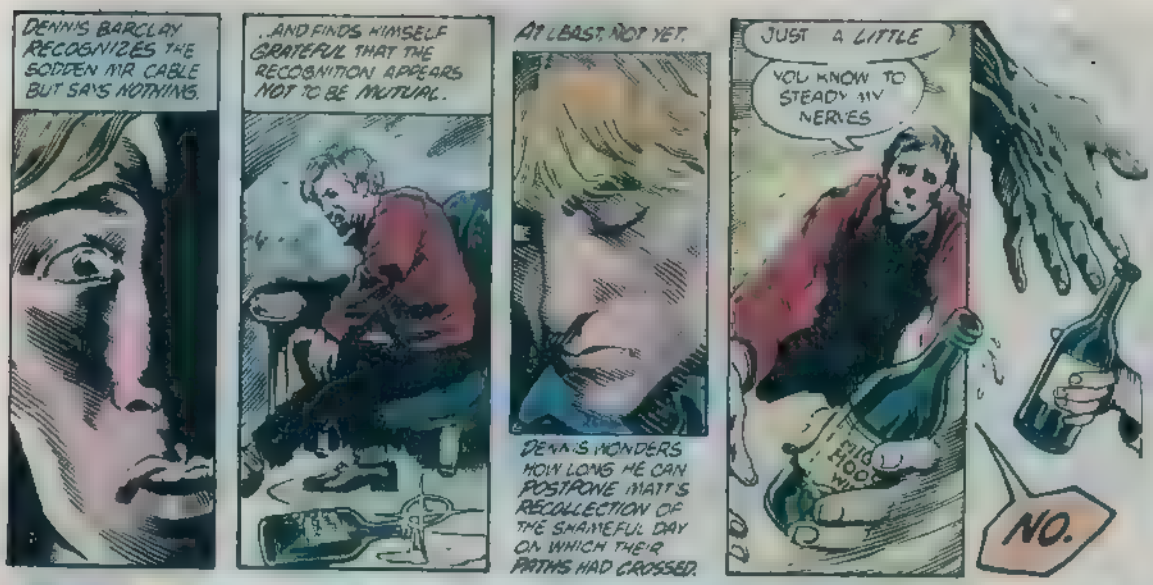

IN HIS INFREQUENT LUCID MOMENTS, HE THINKS OF HIMSELF AS FORMER LIEUTENANT MATTHEW JOSEPH CABLE. BUT THIS IS, IN FACT, NOT THE CASE.
THOSE WHOSE BUSINESS IT IS TO KNOW SUCH THINGS LIST HIM AS MISSING. ABSENT WITHOUT LEAVE.
BUT MATT CABLE REMEMBERS LITTLE OF SUCH MATTERS AND CARES LESS.
FOR HIM, ILLUSION AND REALITY, TRUTH AND SELF-DELUSION, HAVE BEGUN TO BLUR, LIKE YOUR VISION WHEN YOU DIVE UNDERWATER...
OR CRAWL INTO A BOTTLE AND NEVER COME OUT.
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT YOU GOT ME. WHAT ELSE IS NEW?
BUT THIS MUST BE ONE HELL OF A BENDER I'M ON! THERE'S AN 8-FOOT GREEN MONSTER OVER THERE
ONLY IT CAN'T BE BECAUSE IT'S DEAD!

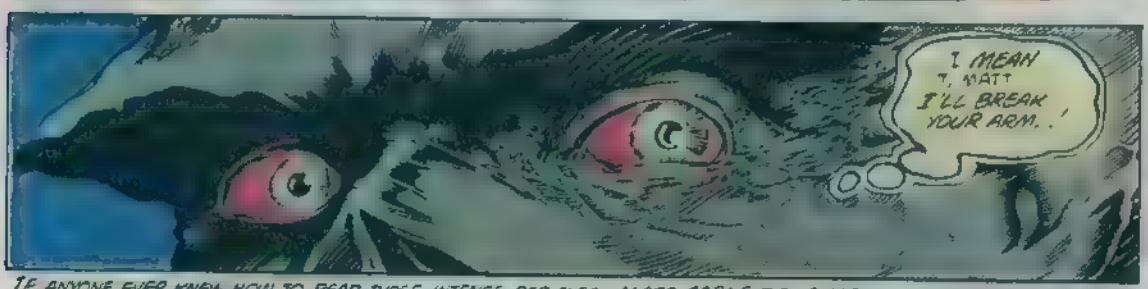
...AND THINGS THAT GO BUMP IN THE NIGHT

a MARTIN PASKO (WRITER) STEPHEN R BISSETTE & JOHN TOTLEBEN (ARTISTS) LEN WEIN (EDITOR) presentation

assisted by TATJANA WOOD (COLORIST) JOHN COSTANZA (LETTERER)

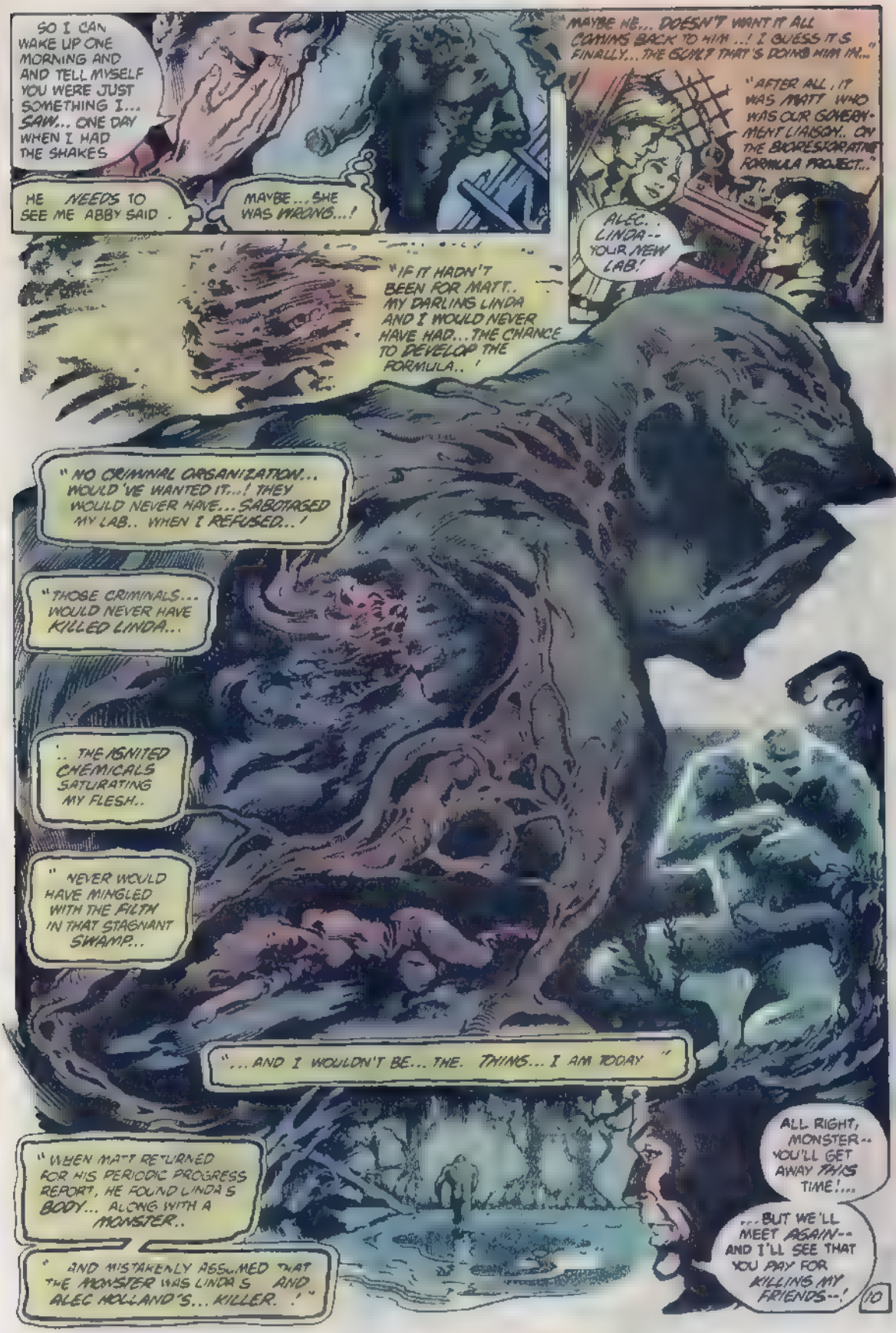
NEWSSTAND EDITION

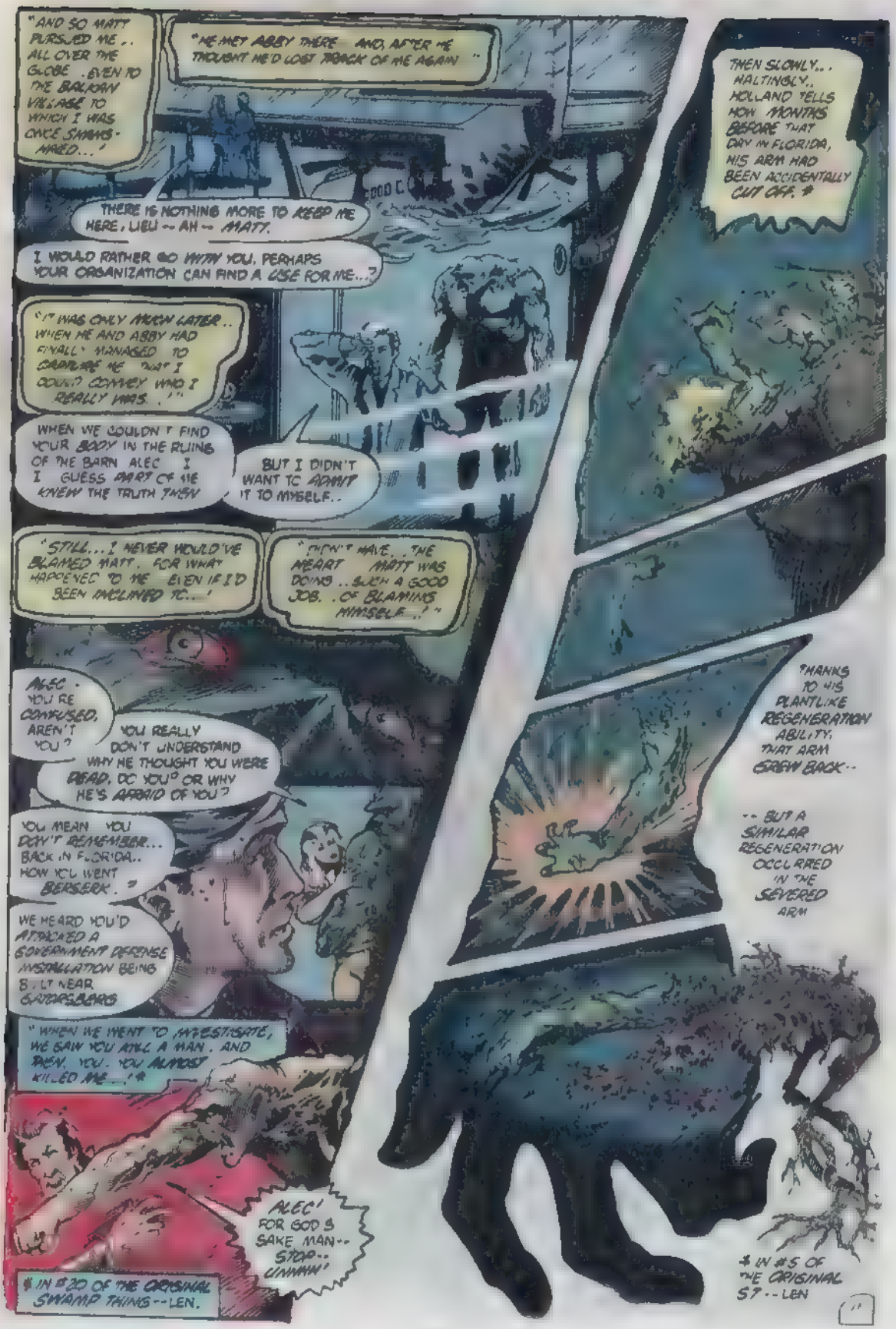

DENNIS BARCLAY RECOGNIZES THE SODDEN MR CABLE BUT SAYS NOTHING.
..AND FINDS HIMSELF GRATEFUL THAT THE RECOGNITION APPEARS NOT TO BE MUTUAL.
AT LEAST NOT YET.
DENNIS WONDERS HOW LONG HE CAN POSTPONE MATT'S RECOLLECTION OF THE SHAMEFUL DAY ON WHICH THEIR PATHS HAD CROSSED.
JUST A LITTLE
YOU KNOW TO STEADY MY NERVES
NO.

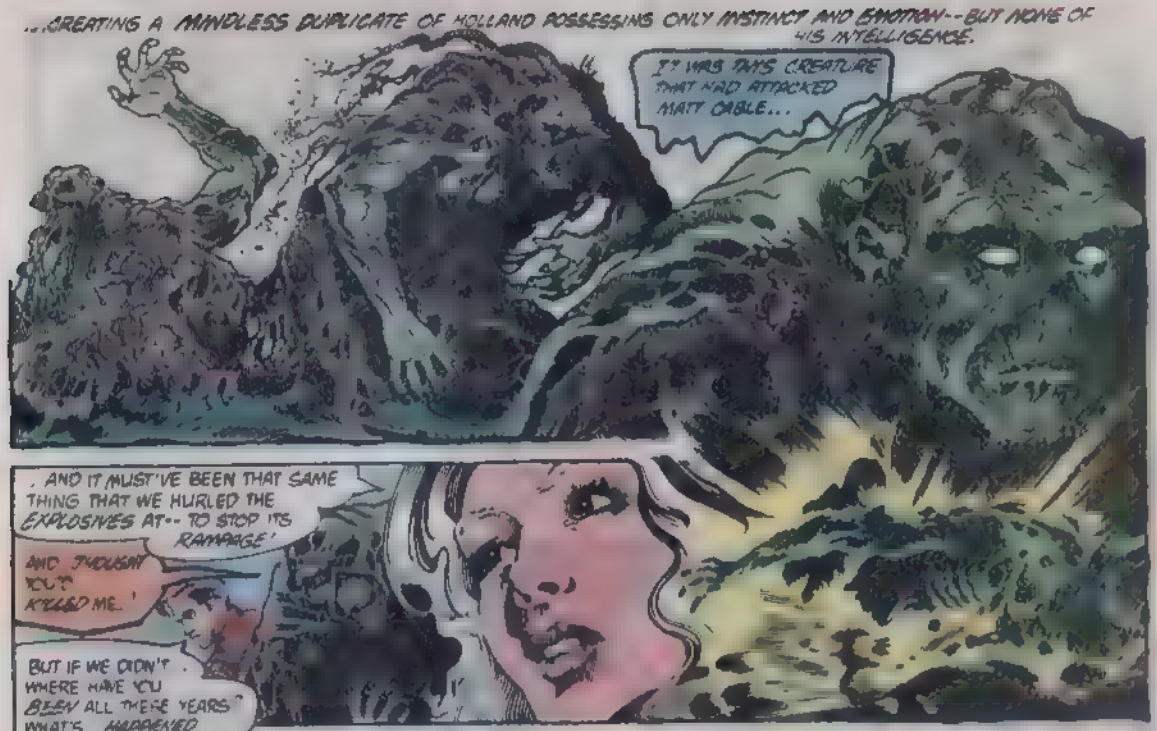


IF ANYONE EVER KNEW HOW TO READ THOSE INTENSE RED EYES, MATT CABLE DID ONCE..

BUT DOES HE STILL REMEMBER HOW..?
NO! DON'T--PLEASE! DON'T HURT ME!
HE, HE'S AFRAID OF ME..? WHY..?
SO YOU REALLY ARE HERE' WHAT FOR? TO KILL ME
KILL HIM? WHAT?
OR OR SAVE ME? YOU. NURSEMAIDING ME 'THAT'S RICH, THAT'S REALLY RICH..'
AW HELL YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO BE DEAD WHY CAN'T YOU BE DEAD?
WHY CAN YOU JUST LET ME FORGET YOU EVER EXISTED...

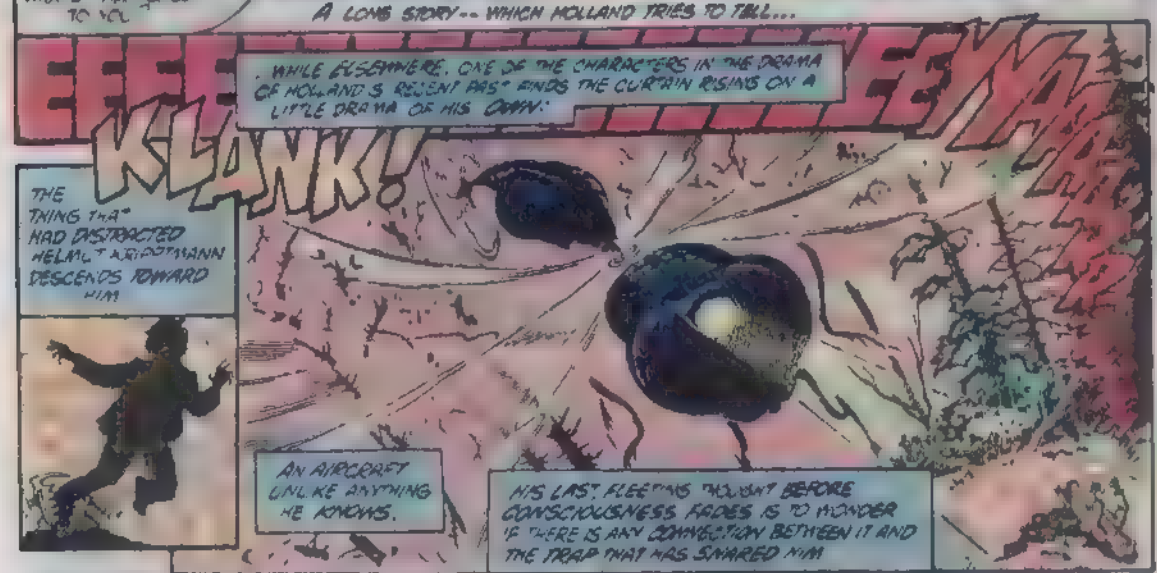

SO I CAN WAKE UP ONE MORNING AND AND TELL MYSELF YOU WERE JUST SOMETHING I... SAW... ONE DAY WHEN I HAD THE SHAKES
HE NEEDS TO SEE ME ABBY SAID .
MAYBE... SHE WAS WRONG...!
"MAYBE HE... DOESN'T WANT IT ALL COMING BACK TO HIM ...! I GUESS IT'S FINALLY... THE GUILT THAT'S DOING HIM IN..."
"AFTER ALL, IT WAS MATT WHO WAS OUR GOVERNMENT LIAISON.. ON THE BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA PROJECT.."
ALEC.. LINDA-- YOUR NEW LAB!
"IF IT HADN'T BEEN FOR MATT.. MY DARLING LINDA AND I WOULD NEVER HAVE HAD... THE CHANCE TO DEVELOP THE FORMULA.. '
" NO CRIMINAL ORGANIZATION... WOULD 'VE WANTED IT...! THEY WOULD NEVER HAVE... SABOTAGED MY LAB.. WHEN I REFUSED.. '
"THOSE CRIMINALS... WOULD NEVER HAVE KILLED LINDA...
'.. THE IGNITED CHEMICALS SATURATING MY FLESH..
" NEVER WOULD HAVE MINGLED WITH THE FILTH IN THAT STAGNANT SWAMP...
"... AND I WOULDN'T BE... THE. THING... I AM TODAY "
" WHEN MATT RETURNED FOR HIS PERIODIC PROGRESS REPORT, HE FOUND LINDA S BODY... ALONG WITH A MONSTER..
" AND MISTAKENLY ASSUMED THAT THE MONSTER WAS LINDA S AND ALEC HOLLAND'S... KILLER. ! "
ALL RIGHT, MONSTER-- YOU'LL GET AWAY THIS TIME!...
...BUT WE'LL MEET AGAIN-- AND I'LL SEE THAT YOU PAY FOR KILLING MY FRIENDS--!


"AND SO MATT PURSUED ME.. ALL OVER THE GLOBE. EVEN TO THE BALKAN VILLAGE TO WHICH I WAS ONCE SHANGHAIED..."
"HE MET ABBY THERE AND, AFTER HE THOUGHT HE'D LOST TRACK OF ME AGAIN"
THERE IS NOTHING MORE TO KEEP ME HERE, LIEU -- AH -- MATT.
I WOULD RATHER GO WITH YOU. PERHAPS YOUR ORGANIZATION CAN FIND A USE FOR ME...?
"IT WAS ONLY MUCH LATER.. WHEN ME AND ABBY HAD FINALLY MANAGED TO CONVINCE ME THAT I COULD CONVEY WHO I REALLY WAS."
WHEN WE COULDN'T FIND YOUR BODY IN THE RUINS OF THE BARN ALEC I I GUESS PART OF ME KNEW THE TRUTH THEN
BUT I DIDN'T WANT TO ADMIT IT TO MYSELF..
"STILL... I NEVER WOULD'VE BLAMED MATT. FOR WHAT HAPPENED TO ME EVEN IF I'D BEEN INCLINED TO..."
"DIDN'T HAVE. THE HEART MATT WAS DOING.. SUCH A GOOD JOB. OF BLAMING HIMSELF..."
ALEC. YOU'RE CONFUSED, AREN'T YOU?
YOU REALLY DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY HE THOUGHT YOU WERE DEAD, DO YOU? OR WHY HE'S AFRAID OF YOU?
YOU MEAN YOU DON'T REMEMBER... BACK IN FLORIDA.. HOW YOU WENT BERSERK."
WE HEARD YOU'D ATTACKED A GOVERNMENT DEFENSE INSTALLATION BEING BUILT NEAR GATORSBURG
"WHEN WE WENT TO INVESTIGATE, WE SAW YOU ATTACK A MAN. AND THEN, YOU.. YOU ALMOST KILLED ME..."*
ALEC! FOR GOD'S SAKE MAN-- STOP.. UHHHH!
* IN #20 OF THE ORIGINAL SWAMP THING -- LEN.
THEN SLOWLY.. HALTINGLY.. HOLLAND TELLS HOW MONTHS BEFORE THAT DAY IN FLORIDA, HIS ARM HAD BEEN ACCIDENTALLY CUT OFF.*
THANKS TO HIS PLANTLIKE REGENERATION ABILITY, THAT ARM GREW BACK..
-- BUT A SIMILAR REGENERATION OCCURRED IN THE SEVERED ARM
* IN #5 OF THE ORIGINAL S7 -- LEN

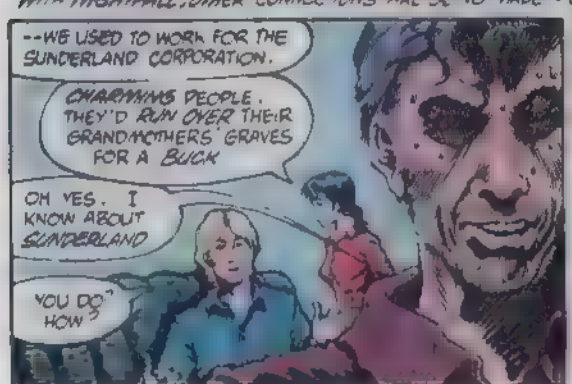

...CREATING A MINDLESS DUPLICATE OF HOLLAND POSSESSING ONLY INSTINCT AND EMOTION--BUT NONE OF HIS INTELLIGENCE.
IT WAS THIS CREATURE THAT HAD ATTACKED MATT CABLE...

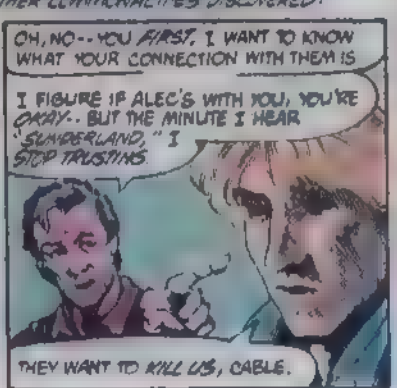
...AND IT MUST'VE BEEN THAT SAME THING THAT WE HURLED THE EXPLOSIVES AT--TO STOP ITS RAMPAGE!
AND I THOUGHT YOU'D KILLED ME!
BUT IF WE DIDN'T... WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN ALL THESE YEARS? WHAT'S HAPPENED TO YOU?

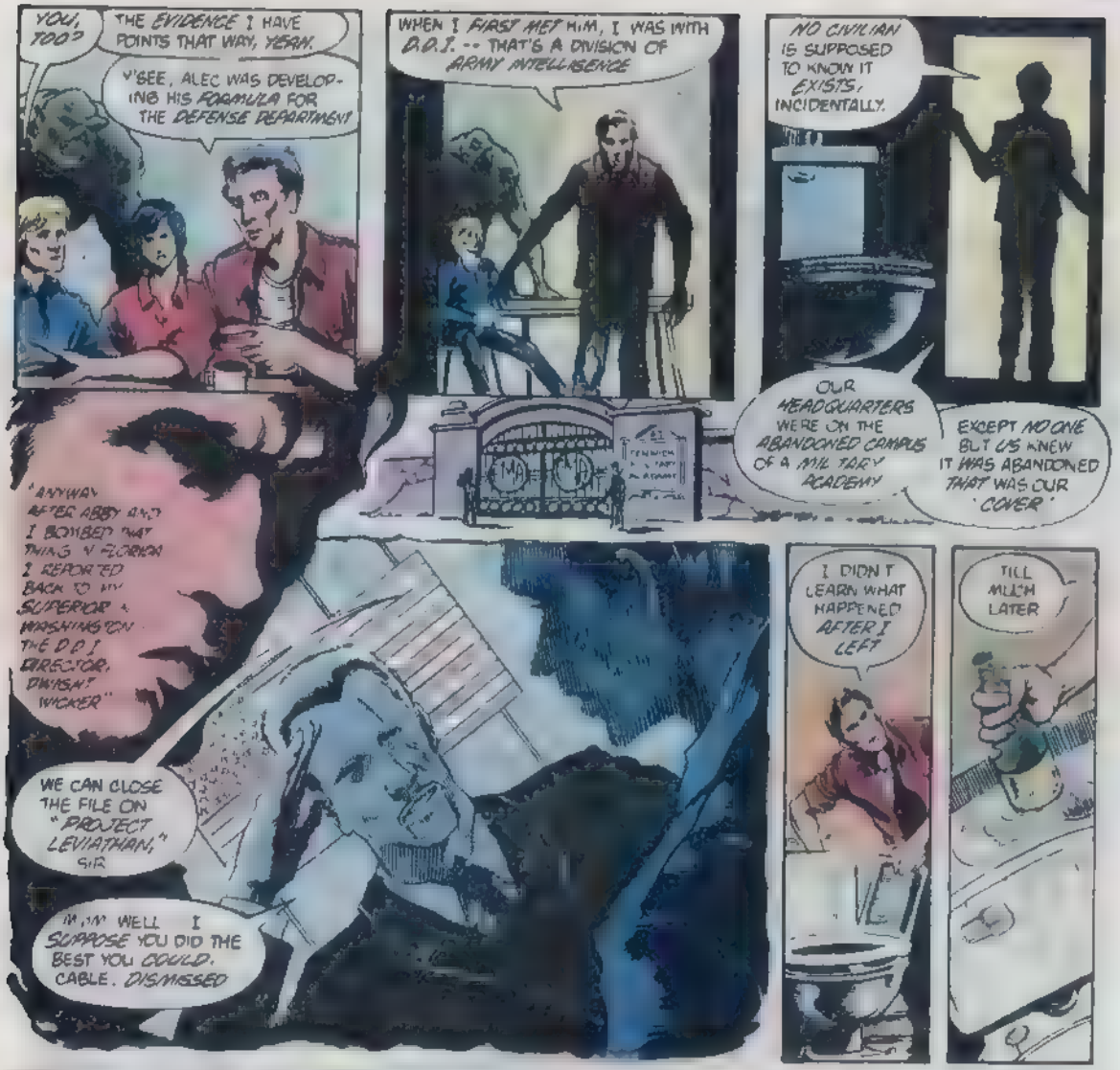
A LONG STORY--WHICH HOLLAND TRIES TO TELL...

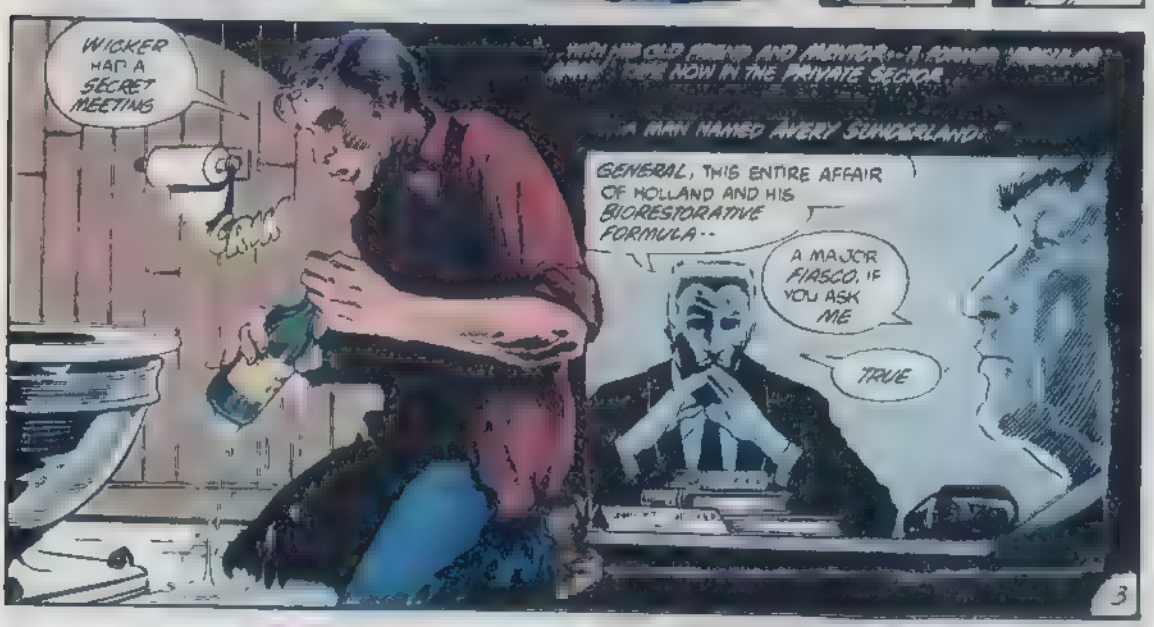

EEEE
...WHILE ELSEWHERE, ONE OF THE CHARACTERS IN THE DRAMA OF HOLLAND'S RECENT PAST ENDS THE CURTAIN RISING ON A LITTLE DRAMA OF HIS OWN:
EEYAA
KLANK!
THE THING THAT HAD DISTRACTED HELMUT ZEMO DESCENDS TOWARD HIM
AN AIRCRAFT UNLIKE ANYTHING HE KNOWS.
HIS LAST FLEETING THOUGHT BEFORE CONSCIOUSNESS FADES IS TO WONDER IF THERE IS ANY CONNECTION BETWEEN IT AND THE TRAP THAT HAS SNARED HIM

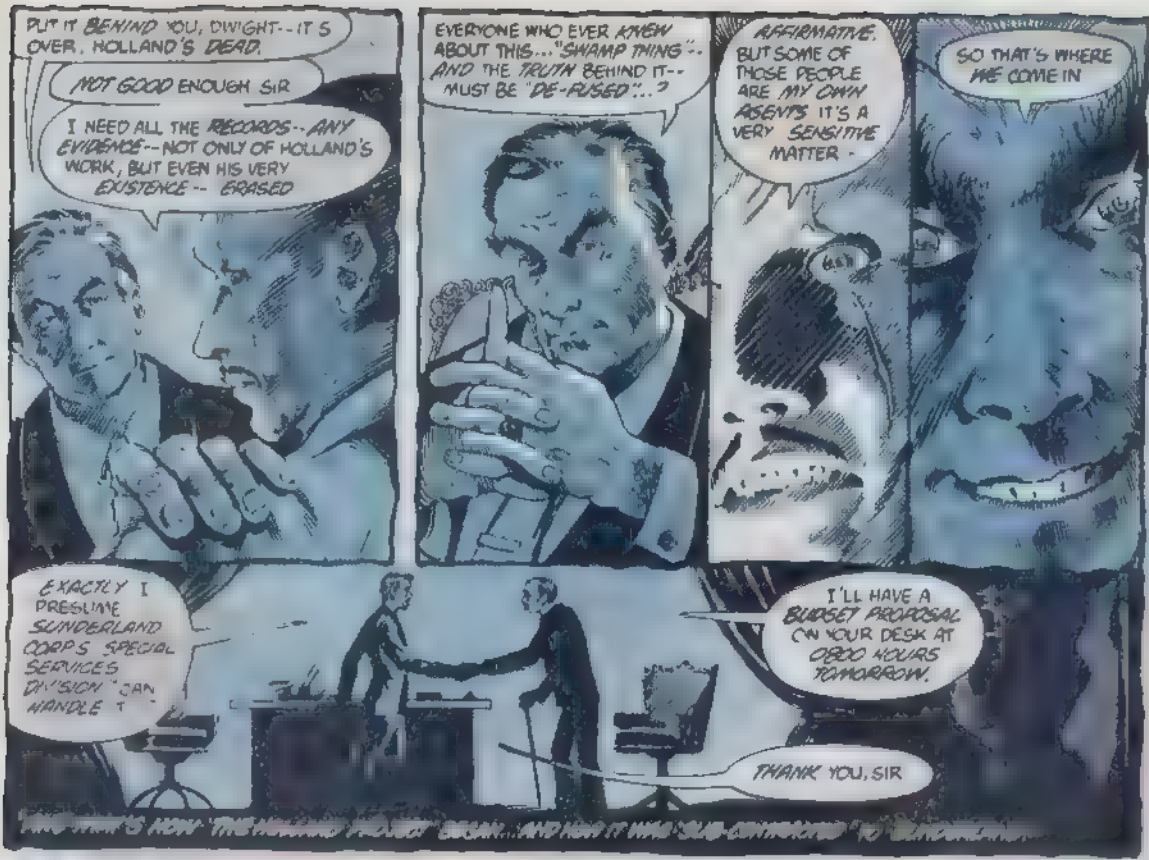
WITH NIGHTFALL, OTHER CONNECTIONS ARE BEING MADE--OTHER COMMONALITIES DISCOVERED.

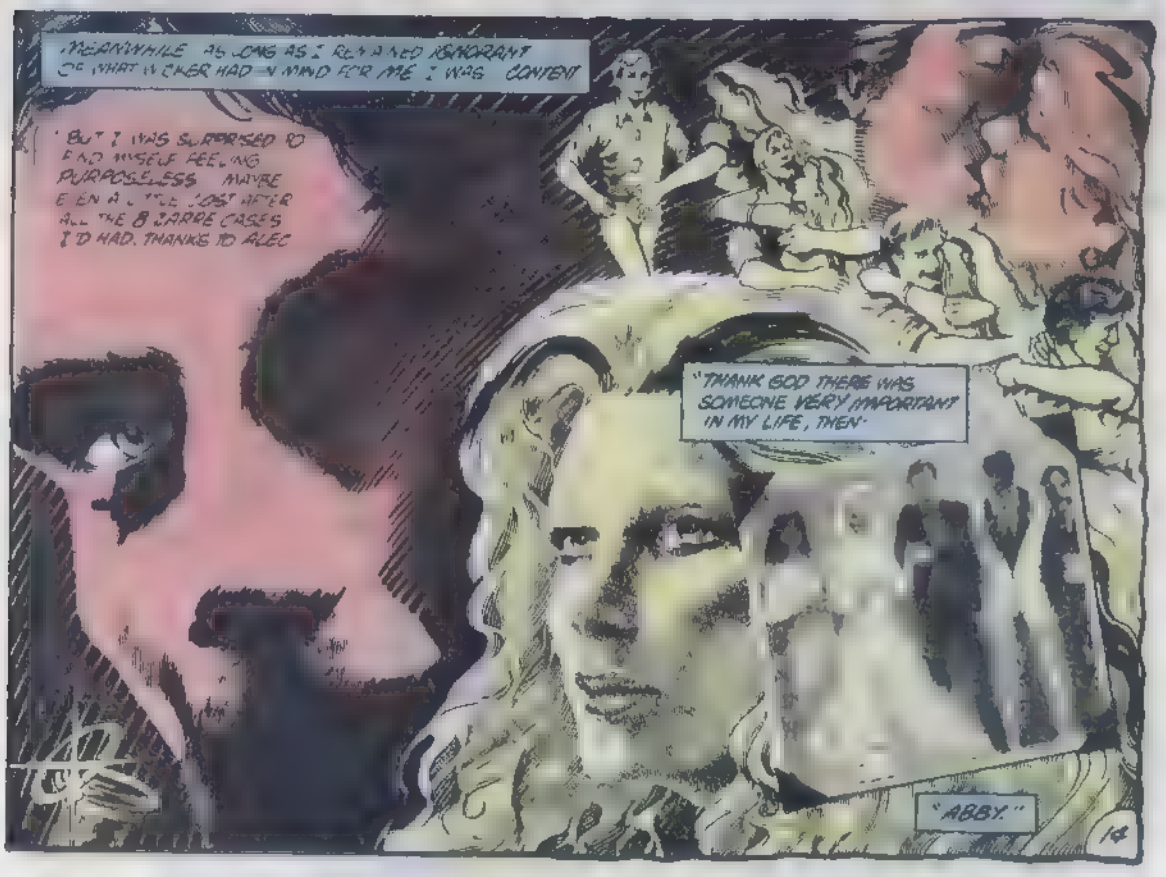

--WE USED TO WORK FOR THE SUNDERLAND CORPORATION.
CHARMING PEOPLE. THEY'D RUN OVER THEIR GRANDMOTHERS' GRAVES FOR A BUCK
OH YES. I KNOW ABOUT SUNDERLAND
YOU DO? HOW?


OH, NO--YOU FIRST. I WANT TO KNOW WHAT YOUR CONNECTION WITH THEM IS
I FIGURE IF ALEC'S WITH YOU, YOU'RE OKAY. BUT THE MINUTE I HEAR "SUNDERLAND," I STOP TRUSTING
THEY WANT TO KILL US, CABLE.


YOU, TOO?
THE EVIDENCE I HAVE POINTS THAT WAY, YEAH.
Y'SEE, ALEC WAS DEVELOPING HIS FORMULA FOR THE DEFENSE DEPARTMENT
WHEN I FIRST MET HIM, I WAS WITH D.O.I. -- THAT'S A DIVISION OF ARMY INTELLIGENCE
NO CIVILIAN IS SUPPOSED TO KNOW IT EXISTS, INCIDENTALLY.
OUR HEADQUARTERS WERE ON THE ABANDONED CAMPUS OF A MILITARY ACADEMY
EXCEPT NO ONE BUT US KNEW IT WAS ABANDONED THAT WAS OUR 'COVER'
"ANYWAY AFTER ABBY AND I BOMBED THAT THING N' FLORIDA I REPORTED BACK TO MY SUPERIOR IN WASHINGTON THE D.O.I. DIRECTOR, DWIGHT WICKER"
WE CAN CLOSE THE FILE ON "PROJECT LEVIATHAN," SIR
M,M' WELL I SUPPOSE YOU DID THE BEST YOU COULD, CABLE. DISMISSED
I DIDN'T LEARN WHAT HAPPENED AFTER I LEFT
TILL MUCH LATER

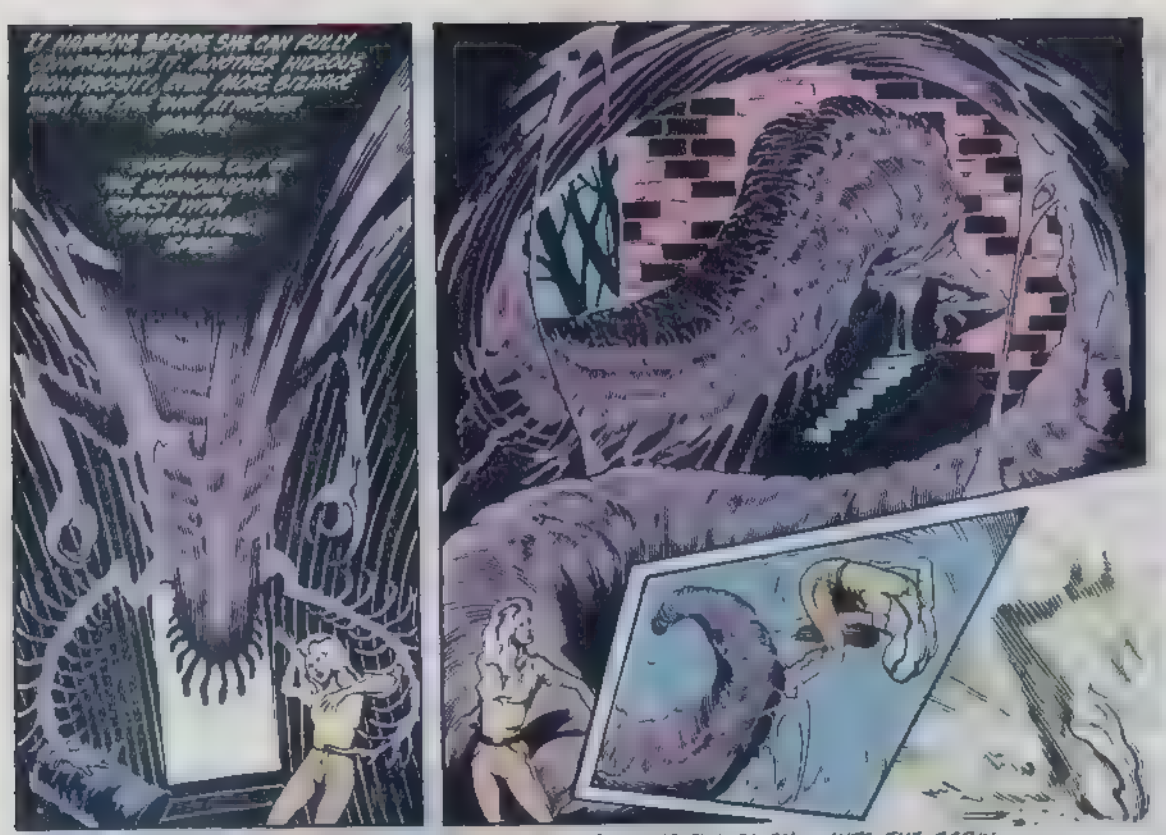

WICKER HAD A SECRET MEETING
NOW IN THE PRIVATE SECTOR
A MAN NAMED AVERY SUNDERLAND."
GENERAL, THIS ENTIRE AFFAIR OF HOLLAND AND HIS BIORESTORATIVE FORMULA--
A MAJOR FIASCO, IF YOU ASK ME
TRUE

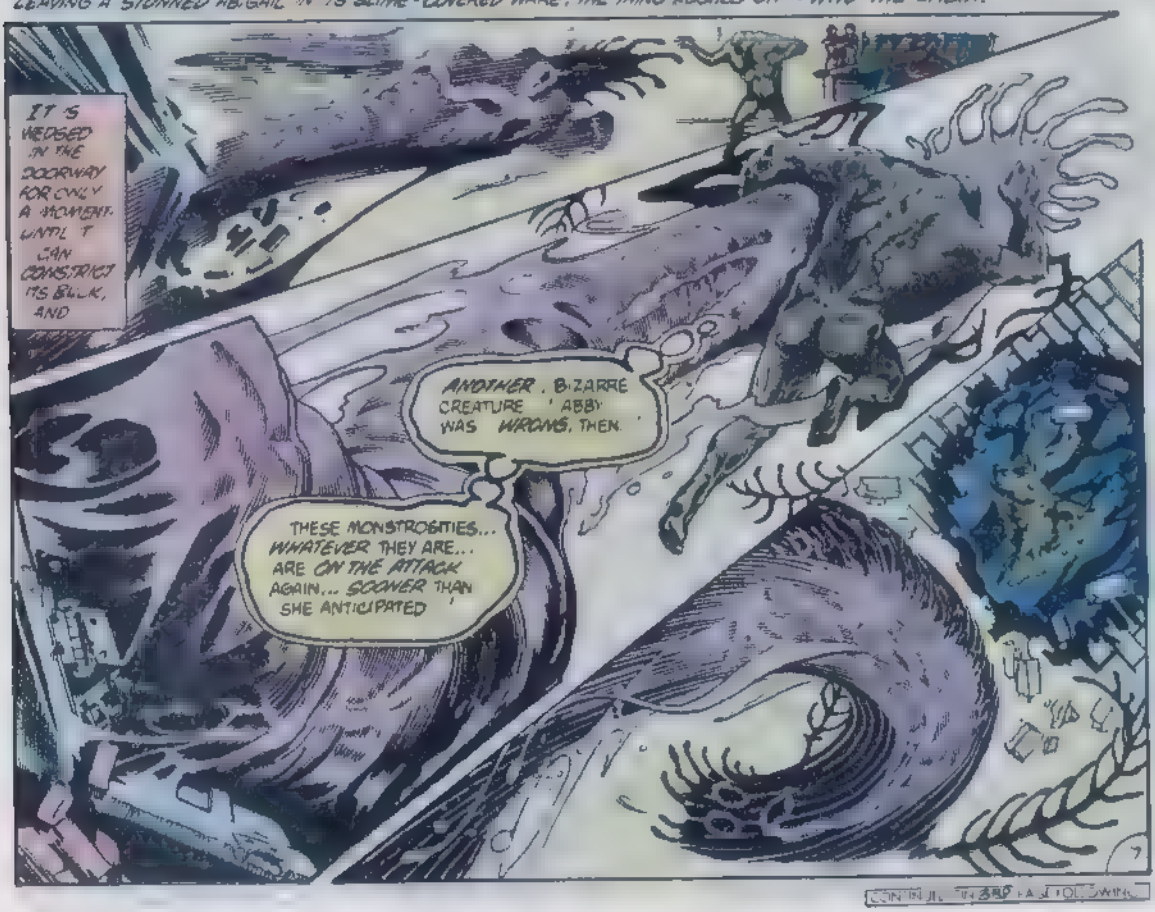

PUT IT BEHIND YOU, DWIGHT--IT'S OVER. HOLLAND'S DEAD.
NOT GOOD ENOUGH SIR
I NEED ALL THE RECORDS--ANY EVIDENCE--NOT ONLY OF HOLLAND'S WORK, BUT EVEN HIS VERY EXISTENCE -- ERASED
EVERYONE WHO EVER KNEW ABOUT THIS..."SWAMP THING"..AND THE TRUTH BEHIND IT--MUST BE "DE-FUSED"...?
AFFIRMATIVE. BUT SOME OF THOSE PEOPLE ARE MY OWN ASSETS. IT'S A VERY SENSITIVE MATTER.
SO THAT'S WHERE WE COME IN
EXACTLY I PRESUME SUNDERLAND CORP'S SPECIAL SERVICES DIVISION CAN HANDLE IT.
I'LL HAVE A BUDGET PROPOSAL ON YOUR DESK AT 0800 HOURS TOMORROW.
THANK YOU, SIR


MEANWHILE AS LONG AS I REMAINED IGNORANT OF WHAT ALEC HAD IN MIND FOR ME I WAS CONTENT
BUT I WAS SURPRISED TO FIND MYSELF FEELING PURPOSELESS MAYBE EVEN A LITTLE LOST AFTER ALL THE BIZARRE CASES I'D HAD. THANKS TO ALEC
"THANK GOD THERE WAS SOMEONE VERY IMPORTANT IN MY LIFE, THEN."
"ABBY."

I DOUBT WE WOULD HAVE GOTTEN MARRIED HAD WE KNOWN WHAT WOULD HAPPEN TO US.
ALWAYS ON THE RUN, LIVING LIKE TRAPPED RATS...
ALL BECAUSE OF THIS WIGGER--
--BECAUSE HE DETERMINED TO TURN EVERYONE WHO EVER KNEW ALEC HOLLAND INTO A "NON-PERSON"...?
YES YOU WOULD NOT BELIEVE WHAT WE HAVE BEEN THROUGH THESE PAST FEW YEARS--
AAURRGH!
MATT! MATT-- WHAT IS IT--?
LEAVE ME ALONE-- I'M ALL RIGHT! JUST LEAVE ME ALONE!
YOU MIGHT NEED MEDICAL ATTENTION, MR CABLE
IT'S IT'S PROBABLY JUST THAT... ULCER ACTING UP AGAIN
I . I'M SORRY I SNAPPED AT YOU, HONEY IT'S JUST I FEEL SO.. SO DAMNED... USELESS--
MATT IF YOU WON'T LET ME HELP, AT LEAST LET DR. BARCLAY HERE HAVE A LOOK AT YOU...?
AT THE SOUND OF THAT NAME, BLOODSHOT EYES SNAP INTO FOCUS.
BAR CLAY ? BARCLAY. YES, OF COURSE.
I THOUGHT YOU LOOKED FAMILIAR.

YOU!
YOU'RE THE ONE WHO DID THIS TO ME!
THE BLOW MISSES ITS MARK
THE SUDDEN RUSH OF ADRENALIN IS TOO MUCH FOR MATT CABLE'S SYSTEM TO HANDLE.
...AND ALL THAT BOOZE CATCHES UP WITH HIM.
WHAT DID HE MEAN, "YOU DID THIS?" "DID WHAT?
NEVER MIND WHAT-- I'LL EXPLAIN LATER.
HE'S OUT COLD, ALEC, HELP ME GET HIM UP..
WE'VE GOT TO SOBER HIM UP.
I WANT TO GET OUT OF HERE, DENNIS-- BEFORE THAT...THING OUT THERE COMES BACK.
YOU'RE A REPORTER, LIZ. AREN'T YOU AT ALL CURIOUS ABOUT WHAT IT IS?
NOT ANY MORE, I'M NOT-- NOT AFTER WHAT WE'VE ALL BEEN THROUGH.
I'M NOT RISKING MY LIFE FOR SOME STRANGER ON A SELF-DESTRUCT TRIP.
I FOUND A BOTTLE HIDDEN IN THE TOILET, FOR GOD'S SAKE! HE MUST'VE BEEN DRINKING STEADILY ALL DAY--
I KNOW I ALWAYS KNOW HE NEVER FOOLS ANYONE BUT HIMSELF
"EXCUSE ME A MOMENT, WHILE I GET RID OF THESE BOTTLES"


IT HAPPENS BEFORE SHE CAN FULLY COMPREHEND IT. ANOTHER HIDEOUS MONSTROSITY, EVEN MORE BIZARRE THAN THE LAST, ATTACKS!
LEAVING A STUNNED ABIGAIL IN ITS SLIME-COVERED WAKE, THE THING RUSHES ON -- INTO THE CABIN.


IT IS WEDGED IN THE DOORWAY FOR ONLY A MOMENT. UNTIL IT CAN CONSTRICT ITS BULK, AND
ANOTHER BIZARRE CREATURE ABBY WAS WRONG, THEN.
THESE MONSTROSITIES... WHATEVER THEY ARE... ARE ON THE ATTACK AGAIN... SOONER THAN SHE ANTICIPATED
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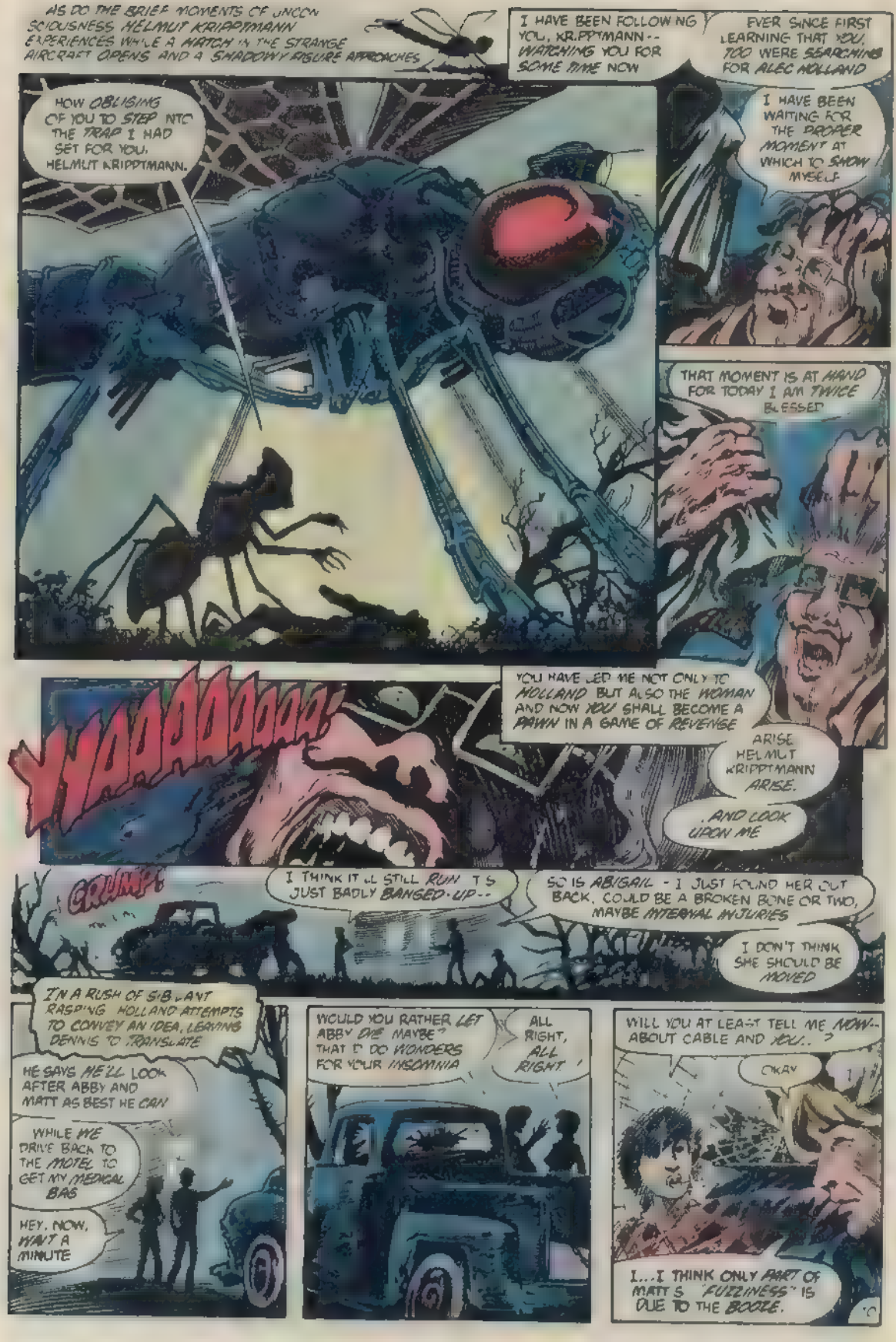
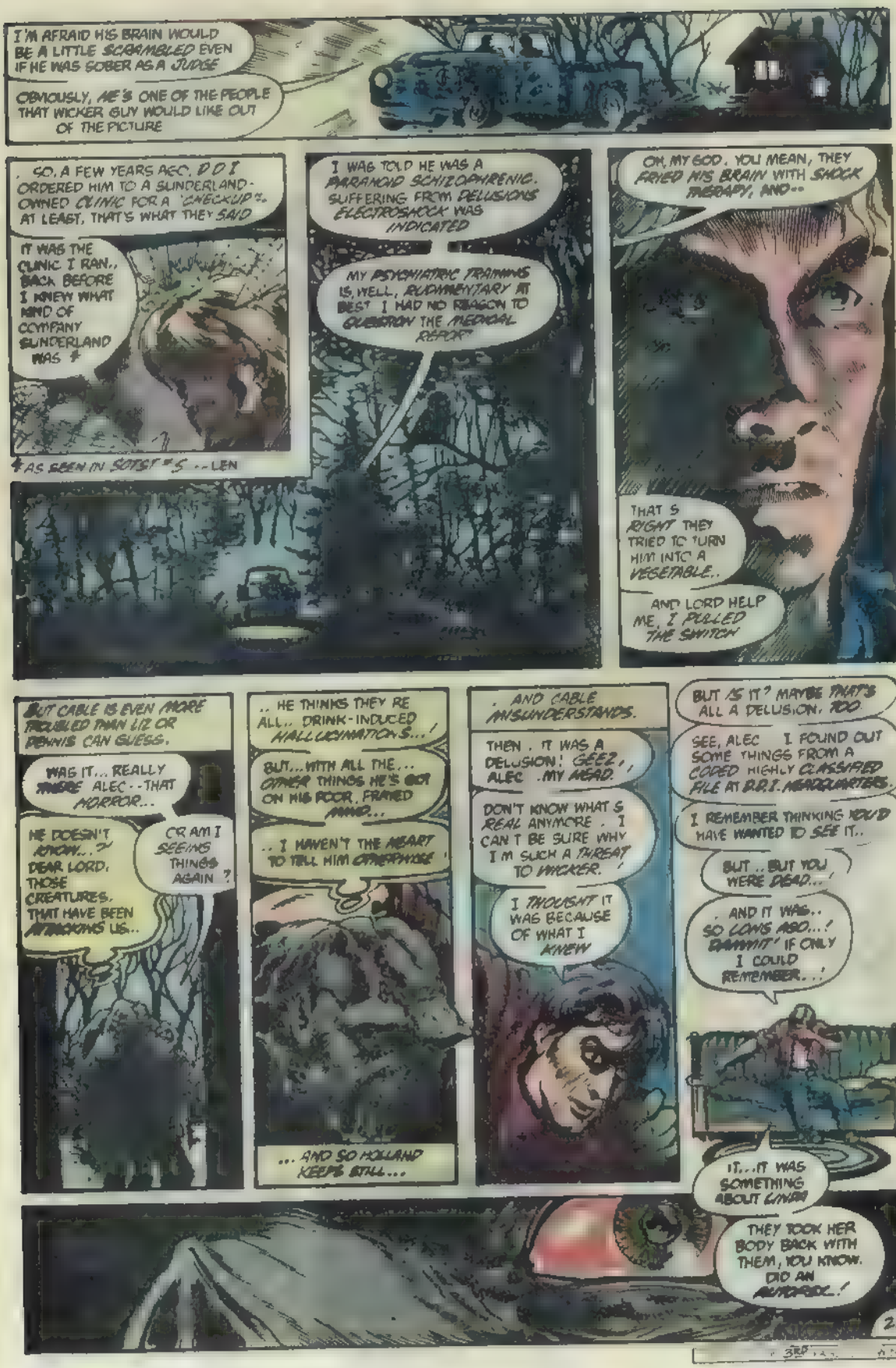
CONTINUED ON PAGE 8

WHAT... THE HELL... IS THAT?
HOW SHOULD I KNOW? PROBABLY ANOTHER ONE OF THOSE APPARITIONS ABIGAIL WAS TALKING ABOUT!
THE THING PAUSES, REARING UP-- AS IF SCANNING THE ROOM FOR A SPECIFIC PREY
CABLE
LOOK-- IT.. IT "WANTS" CABLE!
BUT VENGEANCE IS NOT WHAT HE GETS--
WHAT...?
--ONLY CONFUSION
IT... IT DEMATERIALIZED..?
.. THEN, REAPPEARED.. BEHIND ME..
AND NOW IT'S GOING STRAIGHT FOR MATT. JUST LIKE THE OTHER ONE WENT AFTER DENNIS.
IN THAT CASE MATT HAS JUST GOTTEN HIMSELF ELECTED A DECOY..!
GOT TO LURE THAT THING OUTSIDE
WHERE I HAVE MORE ROOM TO DEAL WITH IT.
18

AND CAN FIND SOMETHING TO USE AGAINST IT
LIKE THIS TREE!
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME?
THAT APERTURE IN ITS HEAD OPENING LIKE A MAW?
GOOD LORD! IT IT'S SWALLOWING THAT TREE-TRUNK
SO MUCH FOR MY BLUDGEON
LOOKS LIKE THE ONLY WEAPON I HAVE NOW IS MY WITS
IN ANOTHER MOMENT THERE IS NO EVIDENCE THAT THE TREE-TRUNK EVER EXISTED
INDEED NOTHING BUT HUMAN THOUGHT--THE ONLY PART OF ALEC HOL AND THAT IS STILL HUMAN--COULD BE FASTER THAN THIS GLITHERING HORROR
THERE IS A MOMENT OF SILENCE AFTER THE ECHO OF THE CRASH HAS DIED OUT
THE CREATURE IT'S GONE COMPLETELY UTTERLY VANISHED WITHOUT A TRACE
AND THEY


AS DO THE BRIEF MOMENTS OF UNCONSCIOUSNESS HELMUT KRIPPTMANN EXPERIENCES WHILE A HATCH IN THE STRANGE AIRCRAFT OPENS AND A SHADOWY FIGURE APPROACHES
I HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING YOU, KRIPPTMANN -- WATCHING YOU FOR SOME TIME NOW
EVER SINCE FIRST LEARNING THAT YOU, TOO WERE SEARCHING FOR ALEC HOLLAND
I HAVE BEEN WAITING FOR THE PROPER MOMENT AT WHICH TO SHOW MYSELF
HOW OBLIGING OF YOU TO STEP INTO THE TRAP I HAD SET FOR YOU, HELMUT KRIPPTMANN.
THAT MOMENT IS AT HAND FOR TODAY I AM TWICE BLESSED
YOU HAVE LED ME NOT ONLY TO HOLLAND BUT ALSO THE WOMAN AND NOW YOU SHALL BECOME A PAWN IN A GAME OF REVENGE
AAAAAAAAA!
ARISE HELMUT KRIPPTMANN ARISE.
. AND LOOK UPON ME
GRUMP!
I THINK IT'LL STILL RUN IT'S JUST BADLY BANGED-UP--
SO IS ABIGAIL - I JUST FOUND HER OUT BACK. COULD BE A BROKEN BONE OR TWO, MAYBE INTERNAL INJURIES
I DON'T THINK SHE SHOULD BE MOVED
IN A RUSH OF SIBILANT RASPING HOLLAND ATTEMPTS TO CONVEY AN IDEA, LEAVING DENNIS TO TRANSLATE
HE SAYS HE'LL LOOK AFTER ABBY AND MATT AS BEST HE CAN
WHILE WE DRIVE BACK TO THE MOTEL TO GET MY MEDICAL BAG
HEY, NOW, WAIT A MINUTE
WOULD YOU RATHER LET ABBY DIE MAYBE" THAT'D DO WONDERS FOR YOUR INSOMNIA
ALL RIGHT, ALL RIGHT!
WILL YOU AT LEAST TELL ME NOW-- ABOUT CABLE AND YOU..?
OKAY
I...I THINK ONLY PART OF MATT'S "FUZZINESS" IS DUE TO THE BOOZE.


I'M AFRAID HIS BRAIN WOULD BE A LITTLE SCRAMBLED EVEN IF HE WAS SOBER AS A JUDGE
OBVIOUSLY, HE'S ONE OF THE PEOPLE THAT WICKER GUY WOULD LIKE OUT OF THE PICTURE
. SO, A FEW YEARS AGO, D.D.I. ORDERED HIM TO A SUNDERLAND-OWNED CLINIC FOR A "CHECKUP". AT LEAST, THAT'S WHAT THEY SAID
IT WAS THE CLINIC I RAN, BACK BEFORE I KNEW WHAT KIND OF COMPANY SUNDERLAND WAS *
* AS SEEN IN SOTSF #5 -- LEN
I WAS TOLD HE WAS A PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIC, SUFFERING FROM DELUSIONS. ELECTROSHOCK WAS INDICATED
MY PSYCHIATRIC TRAINING IS, WELL, RUDIMENTARY AT BEST. I HAD NO REASON TO QUESTION THE MEDICAL REPORT
OH, MY GOD. YOU MEAN, THEY FRIED HIS BRAIN WITH SHOCK THERAPY, AND--
THAT'S RIGHT. THEY TRIED TO TURN HIM INTO A VEGETABLE..
AND LORD HELP ME, I PULLED THE SWITCH
BUT CABLE IS EVEN MORE TROUBLED THAN LIZ OR DENNIS CAN GUESS.
WAS IT... REALLY THERE, ALEC -- THAT HORROR...
HE DOESN'T KNOW... ? DEAR LORD, THOSE CREATURES, THAT HAVE BEEN INFECTING US...
OR AM I SEEING THINGS AGAIN ?
.. HE THINKS THEY'RE ALL.. DRINK-INDUCED HALLUCINATIONS...!
BUT... WITH ALL THE... OTHER THINGS HE'S GOT ON HIS POOR, FRAYED MIND...
.. I HAVEN'T THE HEART TO TELL HIM OTHERWISE
... AND SO HOLLAND KEEPS STILL...
. AND CABLE MISUNDERSTANDS.
THEN . IT WAS A DELUSION! GEEZ, , ALEC . MY HEAD.
DON'T KNOW WHAT'S REAL ANYMORE . I CAN'T BE SURE WHY I'M SUCH A THREAT TO WICKER. '
I THOUGHT IT WAS BECAUSE OF WHAT I KNEW
BUT IS IT? MAYBE THAT'S ALL A DELUSION, TOO.
SEE, ALEC I FOUND OUT SOME THINGS FROM A CODED HIGHLY CLASSIFIED FILE AT D.D.I. HEADQUARTERS.
I REMEMBER THINKING YOU'D HAVE WANTED TO SEE IT..
BUT .. BUT YOU WERE DEAD...!
. AND IT WAS.. SO LONG AGO...! DAMMIT' IF ONLY I COULD REMEMBER. . .
IT...IT WAS SOMETHING ABOUT LINDA
THEY TOOK HER BODY BACK WITH THEM, YOU KNOW. DID AN AUTOPSY..!
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THERE WAS SOMETHING SOMETHING IN THE POST-MORTEM THAT REALLY EXCITED WICKER
I STARTED TO DE-CODE IT WAS FIGURING OUT WHAT IT SAID WHEN THEY CAUGHT ME
THAT'S WHEN THE MMMMMSSMENT STARTED
LINDA ? AN AUTOPSY..?!!
NO WONDER.. I DIDN'T FIND LINDA'S BODY IN HER COFFIN..!
BECAUSE D.D.I., OR SUNDERLAND, NEVER RETURNED IT AFTER THEY'D FINISHED DEFILING IT
I FIGURED.. IT WAS SOMETHING LIKE THAT OBVIOUSLY.. THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY... TO CLEAR UP THE MYSTERY.
GOT TO GET HOLD OF THAT AUTOPSY-REPORT
"CAN'T DO THAT TILL DENNIS GETS BACK. MEANTIME I'LL TRY TO MAKE ABBY COMFORTABLE"
...AFTER WE GET MATT AND ABBY OUT OF HERE. AND TO SAFETY!
YYAAA

OR ARE THEY SOMETHING ELSE?
AS MATT CABLE
THESE APPARITIONS HAVE FORM AND SUBSTANCE.
THEY ARE REAL.
AS HOLLAND TOO DISCOVERS OUTSIDE
MORE WEIRD CREATURES ?! FLYING BRAINS... FLOATING EYES...?!
WOW.. IN HELL.. AM I SUPPOSED TO FIGHT THESE..?!
THE ANSWER TO WHICH QUESTION WILL HAVE TO WAIT
COME, MY CHILDREN. MY MEW LAY-MEN BRING OUR GUEST ABOARD THE CRAFT..
AND LET HIM SEE WHAT MANNER OF HOSPITALITY HE CAN EXPECT FROM..
...ARCANE!
THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT DIE!
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DC
The SAGA of The
SWAMP THING
60¢
NO 18
NOV.
APPROVED BY THE COMICS CODE AUTHORITY
T. YEATES

A CABIN IN THE WOODS SOMEWHERE IN CENTRAL VIRGINIA...
Created by LEN WEIN and BERNI WRIGHTSON
.. WHERE THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE OR ALEC HOLLAND HAS FOUND TWO OLD FRIENDS.. MATT CABLE AND HIS WIFE, THE FORMER ABIGAIL ARCANE
HE HAS ALSO FOUND A HORROR BEYOND IMAGINING.
MORE HIDEOUS APPARITIONS... LIKE THE ONES THAT ATTACKED US EARLIER..!*
*LAST ISSUE. - Len.
DON'T KNOW WHERE THEY COME FROM... OR THE BEST WAY TO FIGHT THEM OFF...!
DIDN'T REALIZE TILL NOW... JUST HOW LUCKY I WAS... AGAINST THE OTHERS...
... BUT.. LORD HELP ME . THIS TIME...
...IT LOOKS LIKE MY LUCK... AND ABBY'S... HAVE RUN OUT...!
OUT OF LUCK: A CONDITION FAMILIAR TO THE MAN INSIDE THE CABIN:
LT. MATHEW CABLE--A DESERTER FROM THE SECRET DIVISION OF ARMY INTELLIGENCE HE HAD SERVED...AND NOW MARKED FOR MURDER BY IT.

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BUT THEIR EFFORTS IN THAT REGARD MAY BE UNNECESSARY.
LT CABLE HAS BEEN DOING A VERY GOOD JOB OF KILLING HIMSELF.
SLOWLY.
WITH A BOTTLE
MORE OF THOSE THINGS...
ALEX'S NOT AROUND THIS TIME!
AND BECAUSE HE'D THOUGHT AT FIRST THAT THESE MONSTROSITIES WERE MERELY A VARIATION ON PINK ELEPHANTS...
. HE DID NOT ACT AGAINST THEM.
NOW IT MAY BE TOO LATE.
WHO ARE YOU? WHERE HAVE YOU TAKEN ME?
LAST THING I REMEMBER... MY FOOT... CAUGHT IN THAT TRAP IN THE MOORS-!
YES, A TRAP I SET. I SHALL EXPLAIN THAT.
BUT FIRST, TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTION: MY NAME IS ARCANE, AND YOU ARE ABOARD MY CRAFT.
TO UNDERSTAND WHAT'S TO BECOME OF YOU, YOU MUST UNDERSTAND MY HATRED OF ALEC HOLLAND.
TO THAT END, THERE IS A STORY YOU MUST KNOW.
BUT WE WILL KNOW IT AS IT REALLY HAPPENED.
IMAGINE, NOW, TIME TURNING BACKWARD:

...AND, DEEP IN THE LOUISIANA BAYOU, A FELON RACES THROUGH THE SWAMP IN SEARCH OF FREEDOM.
WHAT HE WILL FIND IS... SOMETHING ELSE.

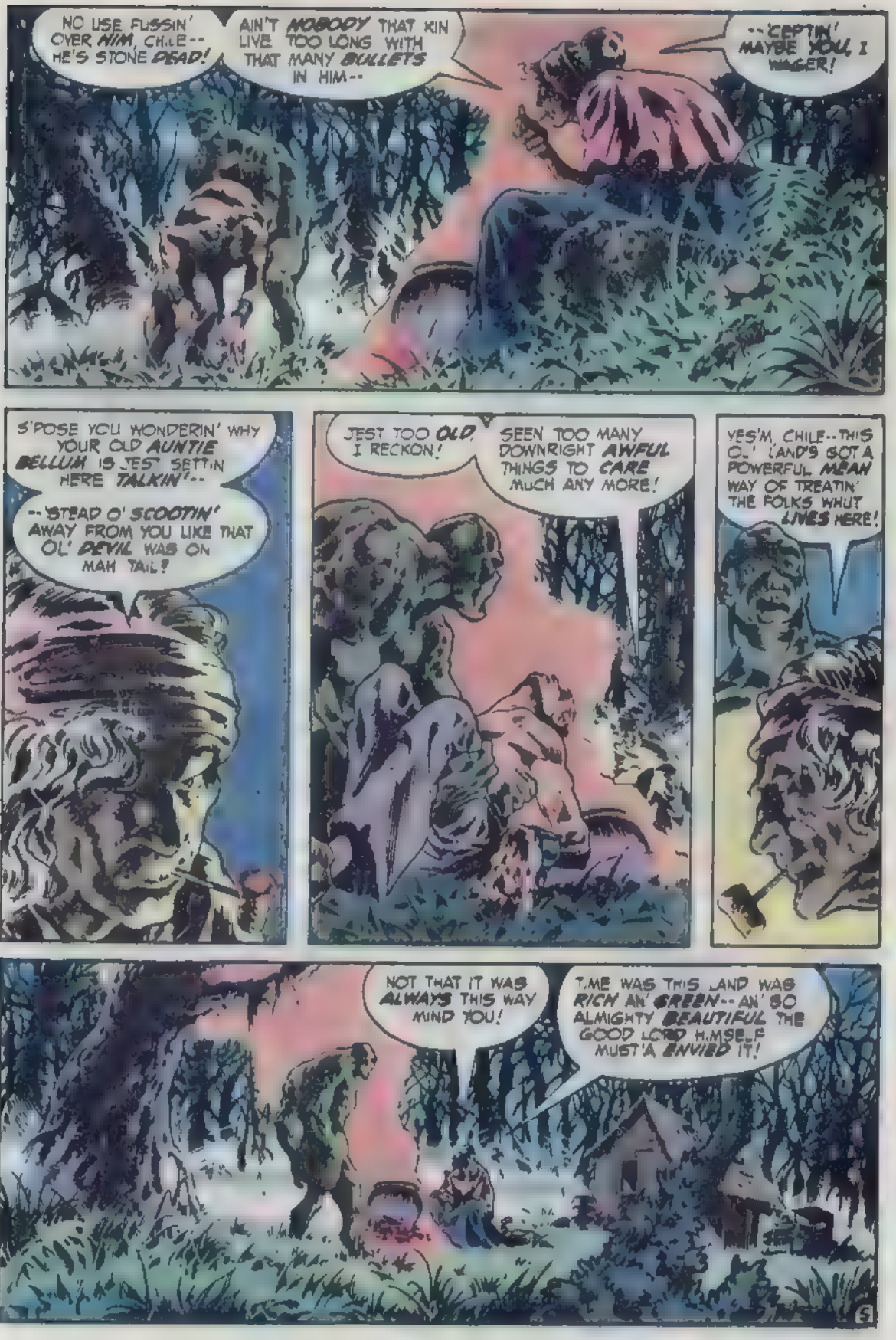
HE HAS BEEN RUNNING FOR MANY HOURS NOW, IGNORING THE SEARING PAINS THAT LANCE THROUGH HIS CHEST--AND, AT LAST, HE HAS LEFT THE MOURNFUL BAYING OF THE BLOODHOUNDS FAR BEHIND...

HIS NAME IS "HUNK" DORRY, NUMBER 2431975. HE IS A FUGITIVE FROM A CHAIN GANG. IN HIS TIME, HE HAS BEEN CONVICTED OF MURDERING MANY MEN--

--AND HE FIGURES THAT, AT THIS LATE DATE, ANOTHER VICTIM MORE OR LESS WILL NOT MAKE A BIT OF DIFFERENCE...

Presented by
MARTIN PASKO & LEN WEIN
WRITER pp 1-2 & 22-28
WRITER pp 3-22
ART S. BISSETTE J. TOTLEBEN AND
ART WRIGHTSON
TATJANA WOOD COLORS
BEN ODA LETTERS
LEN WEIN - EDITOR
...BUT TO THE HUGE SHAMBLING, MOSS-ENCRUSTED MONSTROSITY STANDING IN THE SHADOWS AT THE CLEARING'S EDGE, IT MAKES ALL THE DIFFERENCE IN THE WORLD!
THE MAN WHO WOULD NOT DIE!

DON'T KNOW WHUT YOU COOKIN' IN THET POT O' YOURS, OLD WOMAN--
--BUT I BEEN RUNNIN' SO LONG--HURTIN' SO BAD--FEELIN' SO MEAN--THET I AIN'T ABOUT TO ASK FER NO HANDOUT NOW!
I'M JEST GONNA KNOCK YOU OFF--AN' TAKE WHUT I--!
NO!!
HUH? AIN'T NOBODY TELLS "HUNK" DORRY WHUT TO DO--!
BUT THE SWAMP THING LUMBERS OUT OF THE DARKNESS THEN, DRIPPING A MOSSY WET TRAIL BEHIND HIM--AND THE BLOOD OF THE MAN NAMED "HUNK" DORRY SUDDENLY RUNS COLDER THAN EVER IT HAS BEFORE...
LORD A'MIGHTY!
WH-WHUT INNA NAME O' MARY IS--THAT?
DON'T KNOW WHUT KIND O' MONSTER YOU KEEP AS A PET, OLD WITCH--
--BUT "HUNK" DORRY AIN'T NEVER RUN FROM NO FIGHT WITH NOTHIN'--
--AN' I AIN'T--
--ABOUT TO--
--START--
NOW----


NO USE FUSSIN' OVER HIM, CHILE-- HE'S STONE DEAD!
AIN'T NOBODY THAT KIN LIVE TOO LONG WITH THAT MANY BULLETS IN HIM--
--'CEPTIN' MAYBE YOU, I WAGER!
S'POSE YOU WONDERIN' WHY YOUR OLD AUNTIE BELLUM IS JES' SETTIN HERE TALKIN'--
--'STEAD O' SCOOTIN' AWAY FROM YOU LIKE THAT OL' DEVIL WAS ON MAH TAIL?
JEST TOO OLD, I RECKON!
SEEN TOO MANY DOWNRIGHT AWFUL THINGS TO CARE MUCH ANY MORE!
YES'M, CHILE--THIS OL' LAND'S GOT A POWERFUL MEAN WAY OF TREATIN' THE FOLKS WHUT LIVES HERE!
NOT THAT IT WAS ALWAYS THIS WAY MIND YOU!
TIME WAS THIS LAND WAS RICH AN' GREEN--AN' SO ALMIGHTY BEAUTIFUL THE GOOD LORD HIMSELF MUST'A ENVIED IT!
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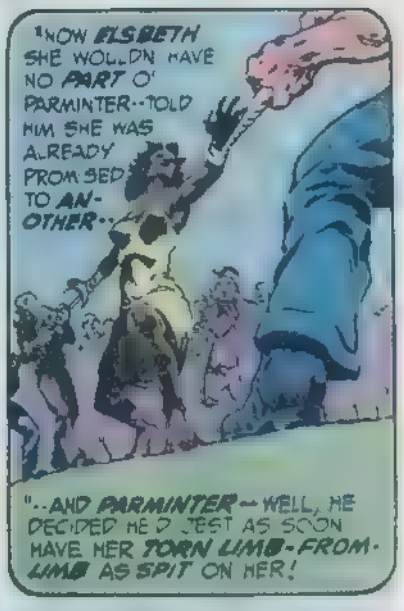
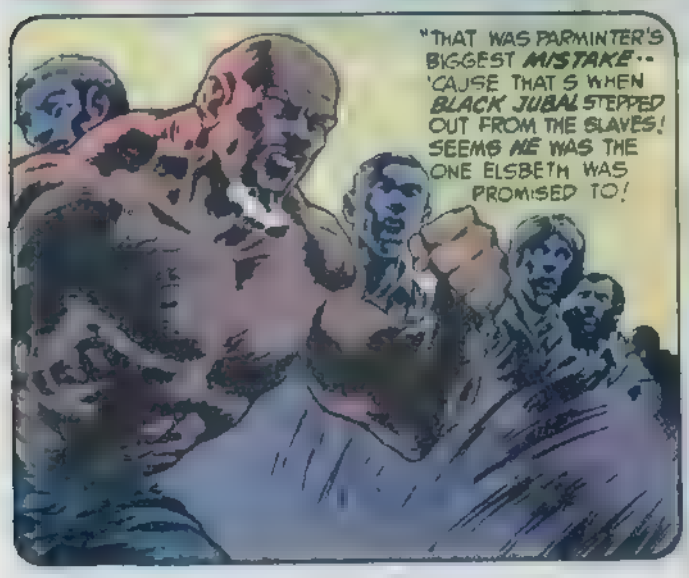
"THERE WAS A COTTON PLANTATION HERE THEN, A GREAT HARM WHITE BRICK BUILDIN' FRONTED WITH TALL MARBLE COLUMNS, BORDERED WITH ROSES AS SWEET AS A SUMMER'S DAWN--
'. AN' FOR A SLAVE, PLANTATION LIFE MIGHT O' BEEN ALMOST PLEASANT--

"--IF'N IT WASN'T FOR THE MONSTER THAT OWNED IT!
"SAMSON PARMINTER, HIS NAME WAS-- BUT THEY MIGHT JUST AS WELL CALLED HIM LUCIFER... BEELZEBUB... OR SATAN!

"A CUSSED MEAN ONE HE WAS-- BORN WITH SOMETHIN' MISSIN' IN HIS SOUL-- BORN WITH A POWERFUL NEED TO HURT-- TO PAIN THOSE WHAT SERVED HIM!

"THE SLAVES, THEY ALL HATED PARMINTER-- BUT THERE WAS NOTHIN THEY COULD DO--
--'TIL THE DAY PARMINTER TOOK A SHINE TO A PURTY YOUNG THING NAMED ELSBETH!


"NOW ELSBETH SHE WOULDN HAVE NO PART O' PARMINTER-- TOLD HIM SHE WAS ALREADY PROMISED TO ANOTHER--
"--AND PARMINTER-- WELL, HE DECIDED HE'D JEST AS SOON HAVE HER TORN LIMB-FROM-LIMB AS SPIT ON HER!


"THAT WAS PARMINTER'S BIGGEST MISTAKE-- 'CAUSE THAT'S WHEN BLACK JUBAL STEPPED OUT FROM THE SLAVES! SEEMS HE WAS THE ONE ELSBETH WAS PROMISED TO!

"NOW BLACK JUBAL HE JEST STOOD RIGHT UP TO O.' PARMINTER-- TOLD HIM OFF STRAIGHT TO HIS FACE--
"--AN' PARMINTER, HE DIDN'T LIKE THAT!
"NO, HE DIDN'T LIKE THAT A'TALL!

"NOW PARMINTER *COULDN'T* TEAR JUBAL'S LIMBS OFF -- HE'D ALREADY TAKEN *ONE* ARM WHEN JUBAL WAS JEST A *CHILE* --

"-- SO THAT MONSTER DECIDED TO *BURN* JUBA. INSTEAD -- SAID IT WAS THE WAY *ALL* GOOD MARTYRS DIE!!

"WELL, AS THEM *FLAMES* LICKED UP AROUND JUBAL'S BODY, THE BIG MAN SWORE AN *OATH* --

"-- SAID EVEN *DEATH* WOULDN' STOP HIM FROM *DEALING* WITH PARMINTER FOR GOOD -- SAID PARMINTER'S BREED WOULD *PAY IN KIND* FOR THE ALMIGHTY *SINS* THEY COMMITTED 'GAINST THEIR FELLOW MAN --

"-- BUT *PARMINTER*, HE JEST *LAUGHED* -- AND ONCE BLACK JUBAL WAS BURIED AN' GONE, HE WENT RIGHT ON BACK TO HAVIN HIS '*FUN*' --

"..AN' IF THE SINS HE'D COMMITTED *BEFORE* WERE BAD -- THEM THAT FOLLOWED WAS *WORSE* --

"-- ALMOST AS IF HE WAS *DARIN'* OL' BLACK JUBAL TO RISE ON UP OUT O' THE GROUND AN' *MAKE* HIM STOP LIKE HE *SWORE* HE WOULD!

"NOW THE *SLAVES*, ALL THEY COULD DO WAS SUFFER AN' *PRAY* SOMEBODY *ELSE* WOULD COME ALONG TO STOP PARMINTER -- AN' ONE NIGHT, SOMEBODY -- OR SOME *THING* -- DID!

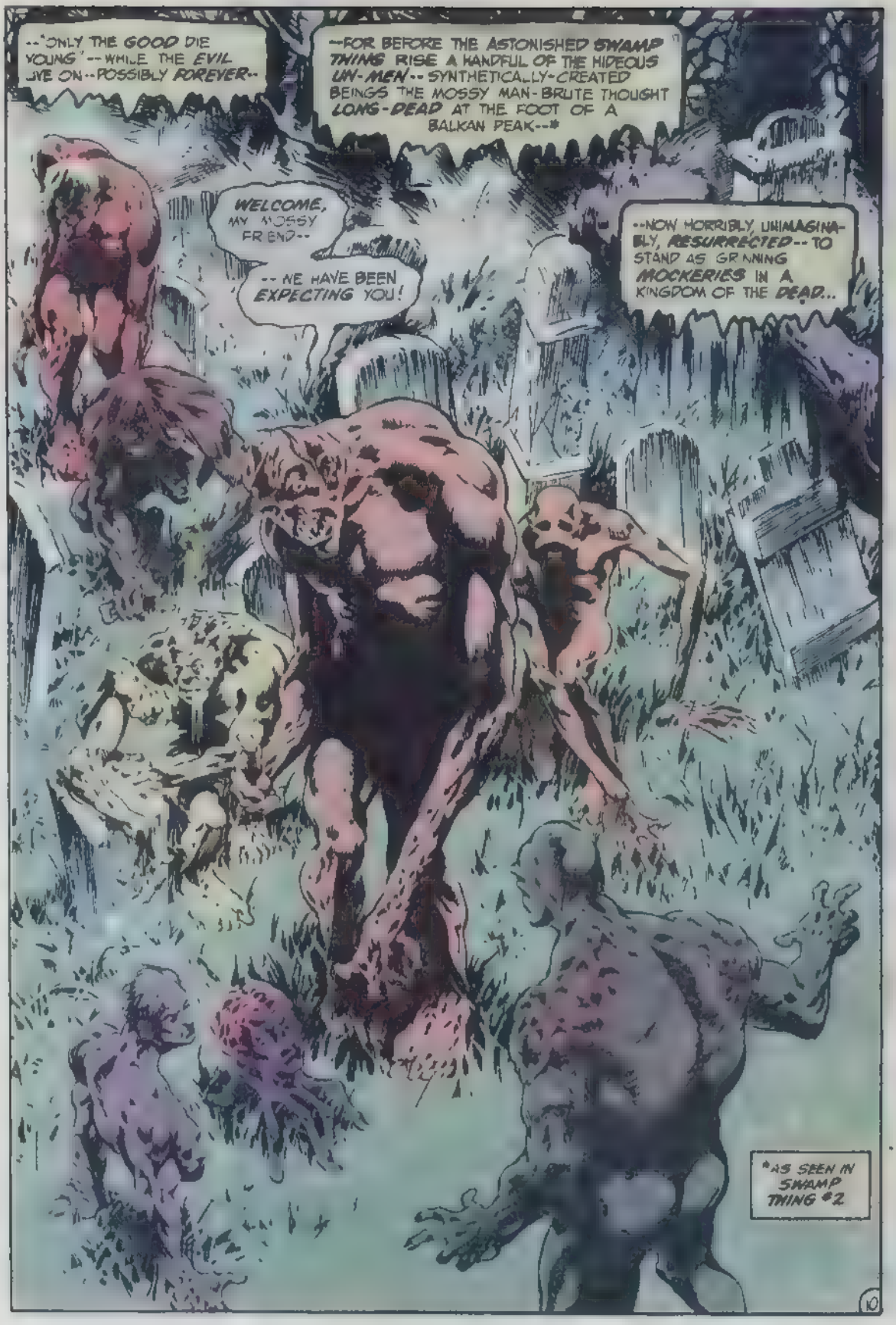
"THEY HEARD *NOISES* FROM THE OLE PLANTATION -- SOUNDS LIKE THE AGONIZED SCREAMIN' O' SOMETHIN' *UNHUMAN* --

"-- AN' WHEN THEY RUSHED INSIDE, THEY *FOUND* MISTER PARMINTER -- IN THE *FOYER* -- THE *LIVIN' ROOM* -- THE *PANTRY* -- THE *DEN* --!

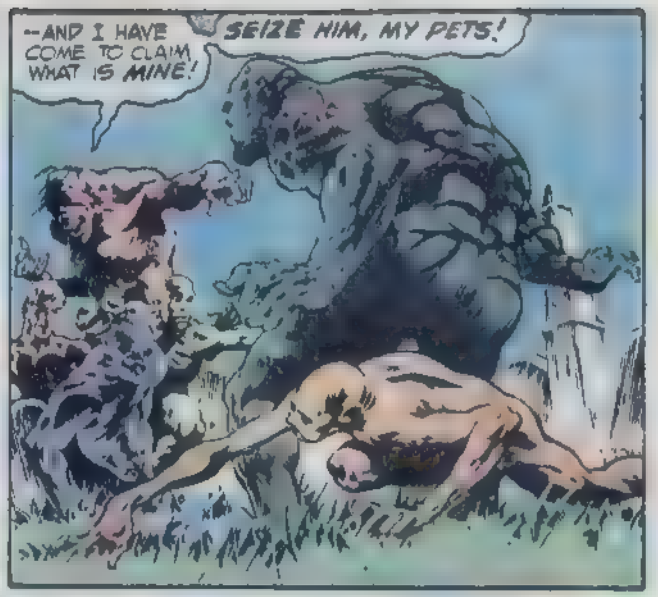
"SOMETHING HAD TORN SAMSON PARMINTER *LIMB-FROM-LIMB!*"

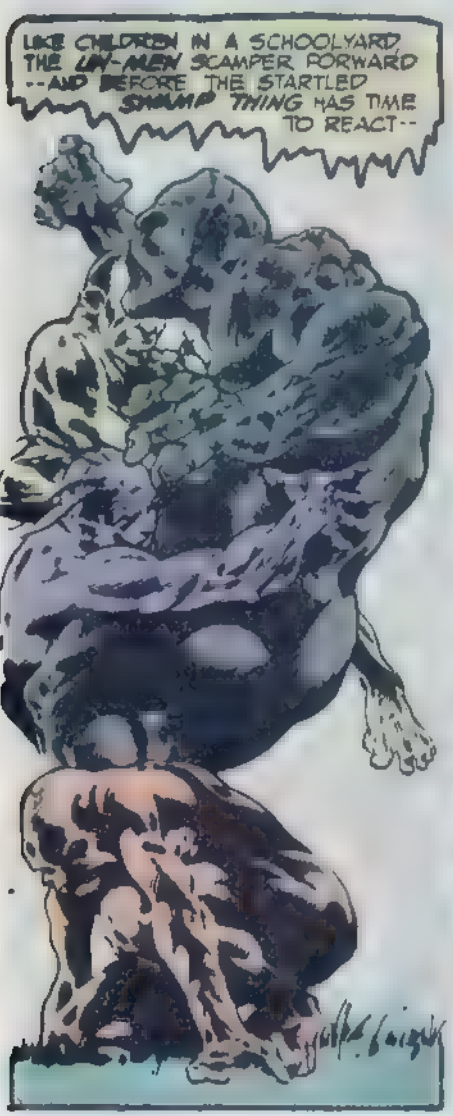
THINGS KIND O' FELL APART AFTER THAT, CHILE!
MOST O' THE SLAVES, THEY RUN AWAY -- LET THE OL' PLANTATION TUMBLE INTO RUIN --
-- BUT OL' AUNTIE BELLUM -- WELL, I JEST DIDN' HAVE NOWHERES ELSE TO GO!
NOT THAT I MINDS MAH LOT, CHILE -- I KNOW IT'S FOR THE BEST!
WHEN YOU GETS AS OLD AS OLE AUNTIE -- YOU KNOW ALL KINDS O' STUFF!
-LIKE I KNOWS THAT THE EYES OF UNHOLY THINGS ARE STARIN' AT US RIGHT THIS VERY SECON'!
THE EYES OF ... WHAT...??
THE OLD WOMAN IS RIGHT...! I CAN SEE THE EYES... GLEAMING OUT OF THE DARKNESS...
... AND I THINK I'D BETTER FIND OUT WHO THEY BELONG TO..!

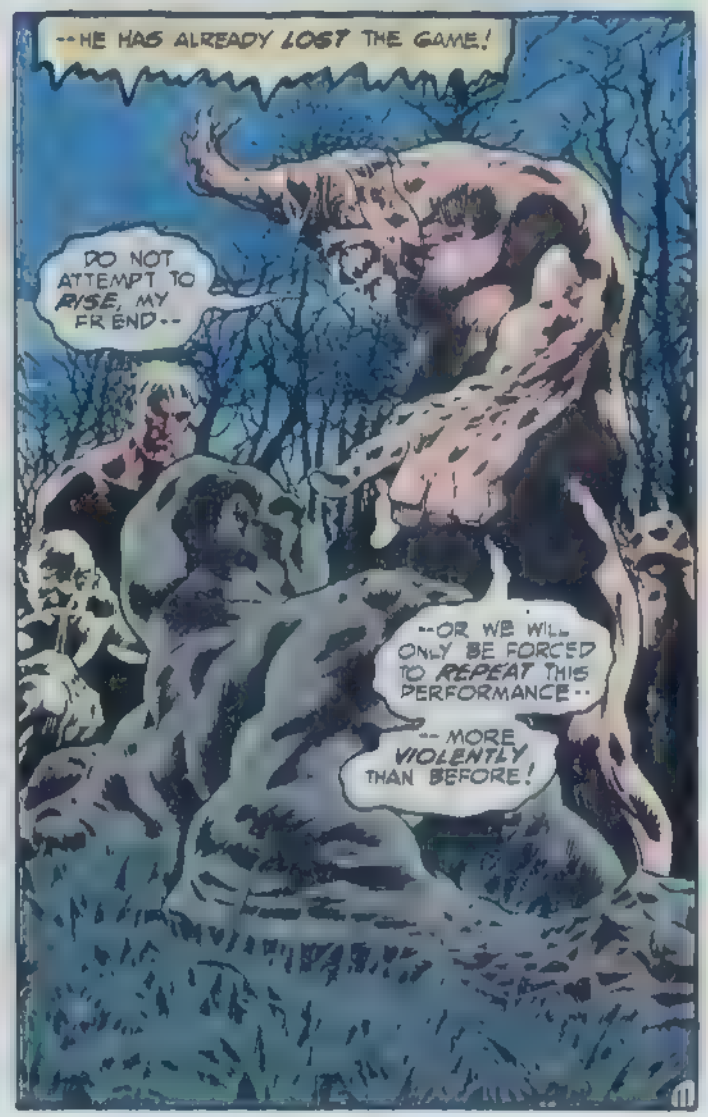
MOVING HIS GREAT SHAMBLING BULK FAR FASTER THAN ONE COULD BELIEVE POSSIBLE, THE CREATURE WHO WAS ONCE DOCTOR ALEC HOLLAND PURSUES HIS GROTESQUE QUARRY THROUGH THE SHADOWY SWAMP--
--AND SOME SMALL MOTE OF MEMORY TUGS AT HIS SLUGGISH MIND: HE'S SEEN THIS PECULIAR, AWKWARD GAIT BEFORE--
--IF ONLY-- IF ONLY HE COULD REMEMBER WHEN...
CAN'T GET A REALLY GOOD LOOK AT THEM..!
THEY MOVE TOO QUICKLY... STAY TOO CLOSE TO THE SHADOWS...
..BUT THEY SEEM TO BE HEADING FOR THAT CLEARING UP AHEAD
AND MAYBE THERE I CAN .
CAUTIOUSLY, THE ROOT-ENTANGLED MONSTROSITY SHUFFLES TO THE SECLUDED CLEARING'S EDGE--
--AND HIS RHEUMY RED-RIMMED EYES SUDDENLY GO WIDE WITH THE SHOCK OF RECOGNITION--
--AND THE DEPRESSING REALIZATION THAT THE TIRED OLD ADAGE IS TRUE--
9


--"ONLY THE GOOD DIE YOUNG"--WHILE THE EVIL LIVE ON--POSSIBLY FOREVER--
--FOR BEFORE THE ASTONISHED SWAMP THING ROSE A HANDFUL OF THE HIDEOUS UN-MEN--SYNTHETICALLY-CREATED BEINGS THE MOSSY MAN-BRUTE THOUGHT LONG-DEAD AT THE FOOT OF A BALKAN PEAK--*
WELCOME, MY MOSSY FRIEND--
--WE HAVE BEEN EXPECTING YOU!
--NOW HORRIBLY, UNIMAGINABLY, RESURRECTED--TO STAND AS GRINNING MOCKERIES IN A KINGDOM OF THE DEAD...
*AS SEEN IN SWAMP THING #2
10

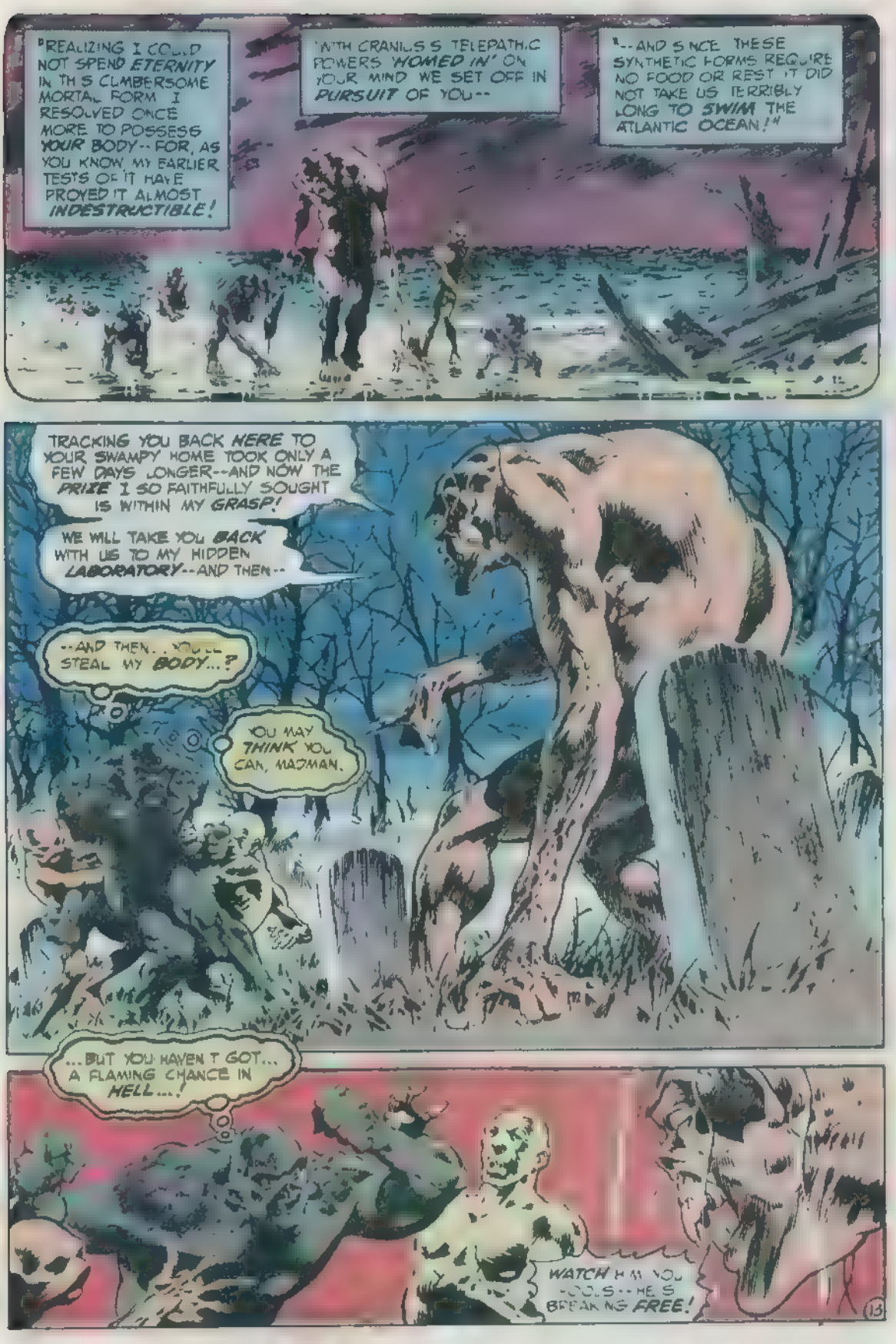
AH, I SEE CONFUSION IN YOUR EYES! YOU RECOGNIZE MY UN-MEN -- BUT NOT ME!
THEN PERMIT ME TO REINTRODUCE MYSELF --
--I AM -- ARCANE --


--AND I HAVE COME TO CLAIM WHAT IS MINE!
SEIZE HIM, MY PETS!


LIKE CHILDREN IN A SCHOOLYARD THE UN-MEN SCAMPER FORWARD --AND BEFORE THE STARTLED SWAMP THING HAS TIME TO REACT --

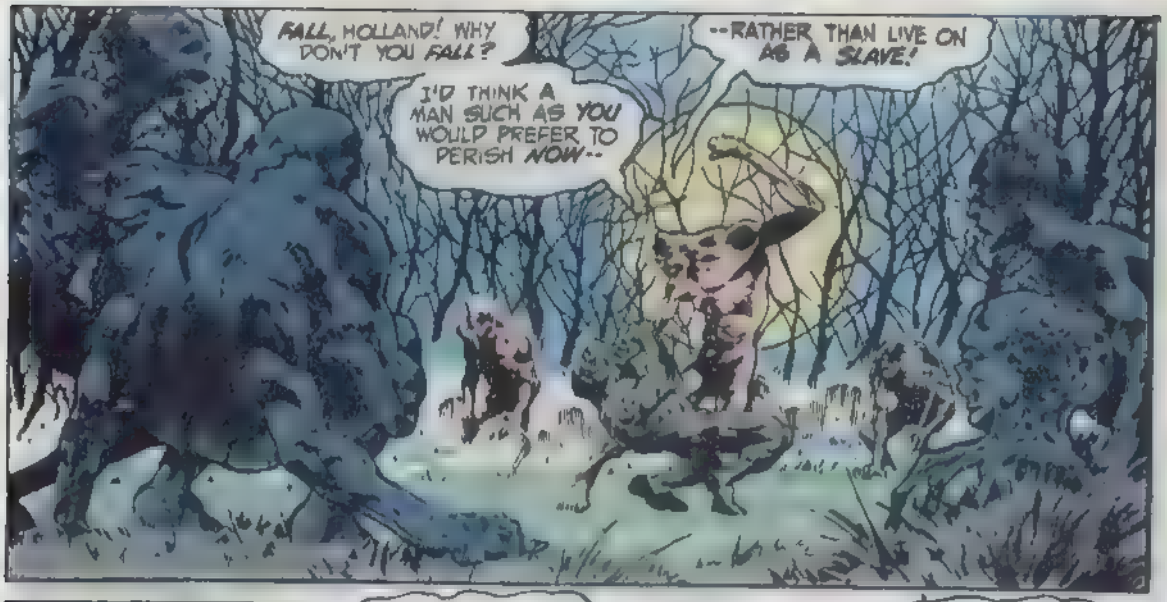

--HE HAS ALREADY LOST THE GAME!
DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RISE, MY FRIEND --
--OR WE WILL ONLY BE FORCED TO REPEAT THIS PERFORMANCE --
-- MORE VIOLENTLY THAN BEFORE!

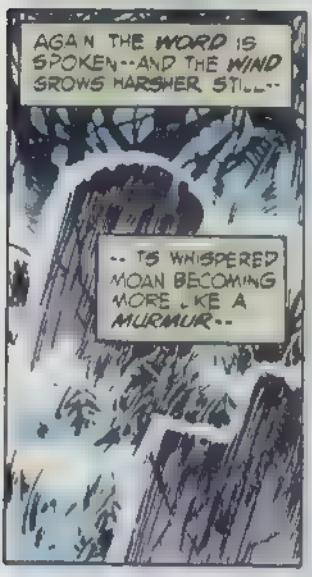
UNDOUBTEDLY, YOU ARE WONDERING HOW I SURVIVED THE FALL FROM MY TOWER--AND HOW MY MAGNIFICENT MIND CAME TO BE IN THIS GROSS, MISSHAPEN FORM--
--AND SINCE YOU, ABOVE ANYONE ELSE IN THIS WORLD, WOULD APPRECIATE THE IRONY OF IT ALL--
--I SHALL TELL YOU!
"IN TRUTH I DID NOT SURVIVE THE FALL' THOUGH THE SPARK OF LIFE REMAINED WITHIN ME--
"I HAD SHATTERED EVERY SINGLE BONE IN MY BODY!
"THOSE FEW REMAINING OF MY LIV-MEN, UNDER THE DIRECTION OF THE LIVING BRAIN, CRANIUS, CARRIED MY BROKEN BODY TO A SECRET LABORATORY--
"--WHERE UNDER MY SEMI-TELEPATHIC CONTROL, CRANIUS SUPERVISED THE PRODUCTION OF A MIRACLE!
FROM A VAST SUPPLY OF COMPONENT PARTS I HAD STORED THERE FOR JUST SUCH AN EMERGENCY, THEY CONSTRUCTED A SYNTHETIC BODY TO HOUSE MY UNDAMAGED MIND--
--BUT WITHOUT MY MASTERFUL HAND TO GUIDE THEM, THE RESULTS OF THE OPERATION WERE--
"--ER SOMEWHAT LESS THAN PERFECT!
12

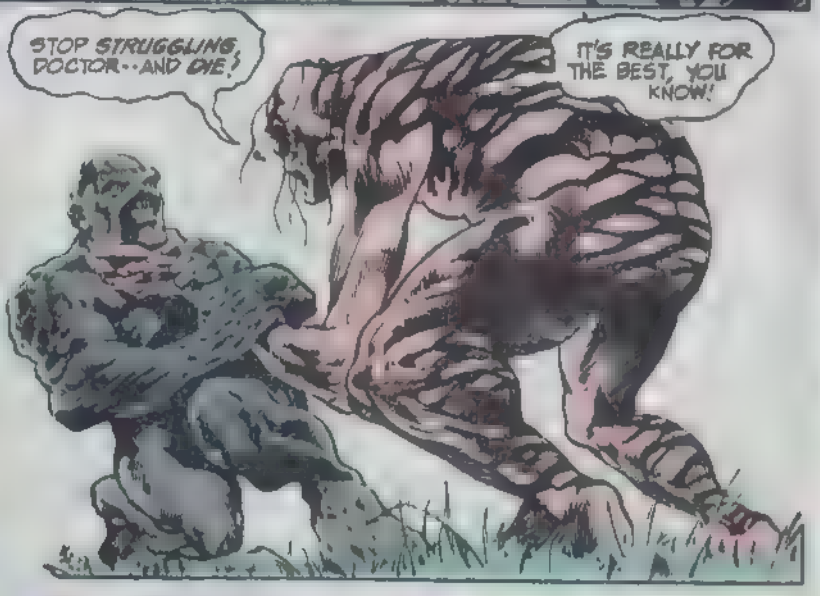

"REALIZING I COULD NOT SPEND ETERNITY IN THIS CUMBERSOME MORTAL FORM I RESOLVED ONCE MORE TO POSSESS YOUR BODY--FOR, AS YOU KNOW, MY EARLIER TESTS OF IT HAVE PROVED IT ALMOST INDESTRUCTIBLE!
WITH CRANIUS'S TELEPATHIC POWERS 'HOMED IN' ON YOUR MIND WE SET OFF IN PURSUIT OF YOU--
"--AND SINCE THESE SYNTHETIC FORMS REQUIRE NO FOOD OR REST IT DID NOT TAKE US TERRIBLY LONG TO SWIM THE ATLANTIC OCEAN!"
TRACKING YOU BACK HERE TO YOUR SWAMPY HOME TOOK ONLY A FEW DAYS LONGER--AND NOW THE PRIZE I SO FAITHFULLY SOUGHT IS WITHIN MY GRASP!
WE WILL TAKE YOU BACK WITH US TO MY HIDDEN LABORATORY--AND THEN--
--AND THEN...YOU'LL STEAL MY BODY...?
YOU MAY THINK YOU CAN, MADMAN.
...BUT YOU HAVEN'T GOT... A FLAMING CHANCE IN HELL...!
WATCH HIM, YOU FOOLS--HE'S BREAKING FREE!
13

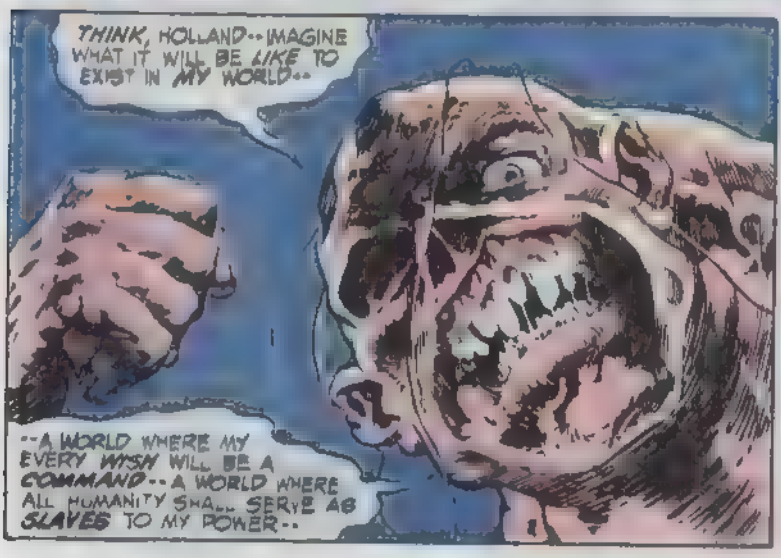
I'VE BROKEN FREE, ARCANE. AND NOW.
SO, MY FRIEND--YOU SEEK TO MAKE ME EARN YOUR BODY?
VERY WELL, THEN --IF YOU INSIST--
--IT WILL ONLY MAKE MY EVENTUAL VICTORY THAT MUCH SWEETER!
KRAKOOM!
STAY BACK, MY PETS-- STAY BACK!
IF I CANNOT DEFEAT HOLLAND ALONE--I DO NOT DESERVE TO OWN HIS BODY!
AN IMPRESSIVE SPEECH, ARCANE
.. A SHAME YOUR WORDS ARE AS HOLLOW ...AS YOUR HEAD....!
BROK!
WELL STRUCK, DOCTOR; YOU'RE A MOST WORTHY ADVERSARY!
IT WOULD SEEM I AM IN FOR THE BATTLE OF MY LIFE!
A PITY, THEN, THAT THE BATTLE WILL BE SUCH A SHORT ONE!
14

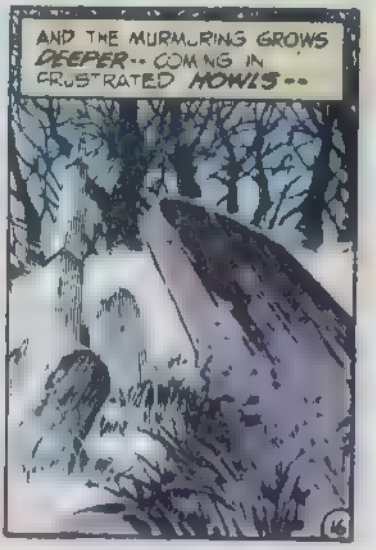
YOU FORGET, DOCTOR HOLLAND -- I'VE STUDIED YOUR BODY--
--I KNOW ALL ITS WEAK AND STRONG POINTS--
--SO IT WILL NOT BE TOO DIFFICULT FOR ME TO CONQUER [illegible] WITHOUT HARMING YOUR MOSSY FORM!
AFTER ALL, I'LL NEED A BODY THAT IS IN PERFECT CONDITION IF I'M GOING TO ENSLAVE THE...
--UNNFF!
A SUDDEN GUST OF WIND WELLS UP AT THE MENTION OF -- THE WORD--
--A COLD WIND WHOSE WHISPER SEEMS THE MOAN OF TORMENTED SOULS--
--BUT THOSE WHO BATTLE IN THIS GRISLY ARENA CHOOSE TO IGNORE THE WIND--
--FOR THE ELEMENTS ARE AS NOTHING BEFORE THEIR OWN PRIMORDIAL HATE...

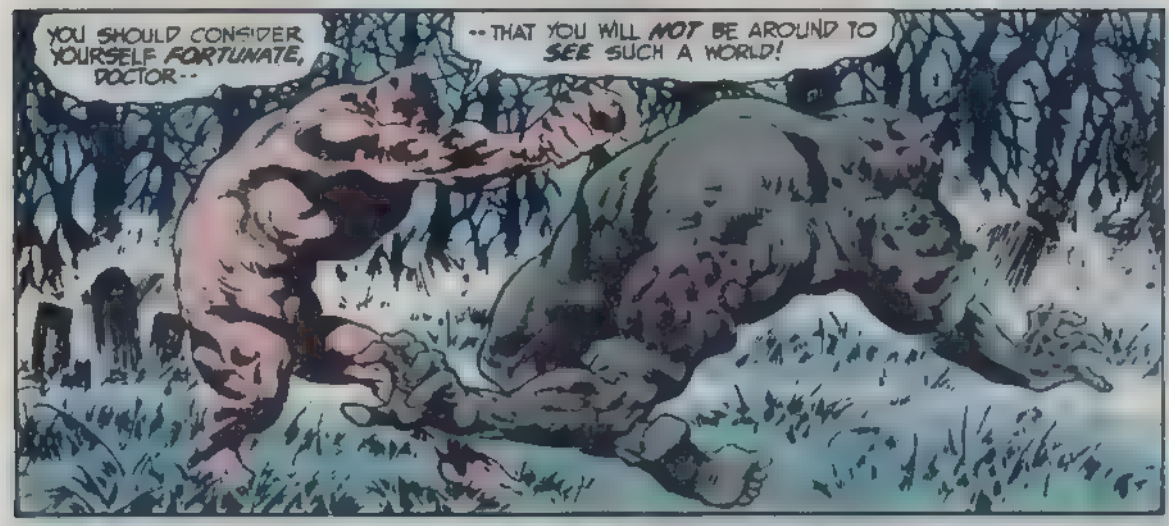

FALL, HOLLAND! WHY DON'T YOU FALL?
I'D THINK A MAN SUCH AS YOU WOULD PREFER TO PERISH NOW--
--RATHER THAN LIVE ON AS A SLAVE!

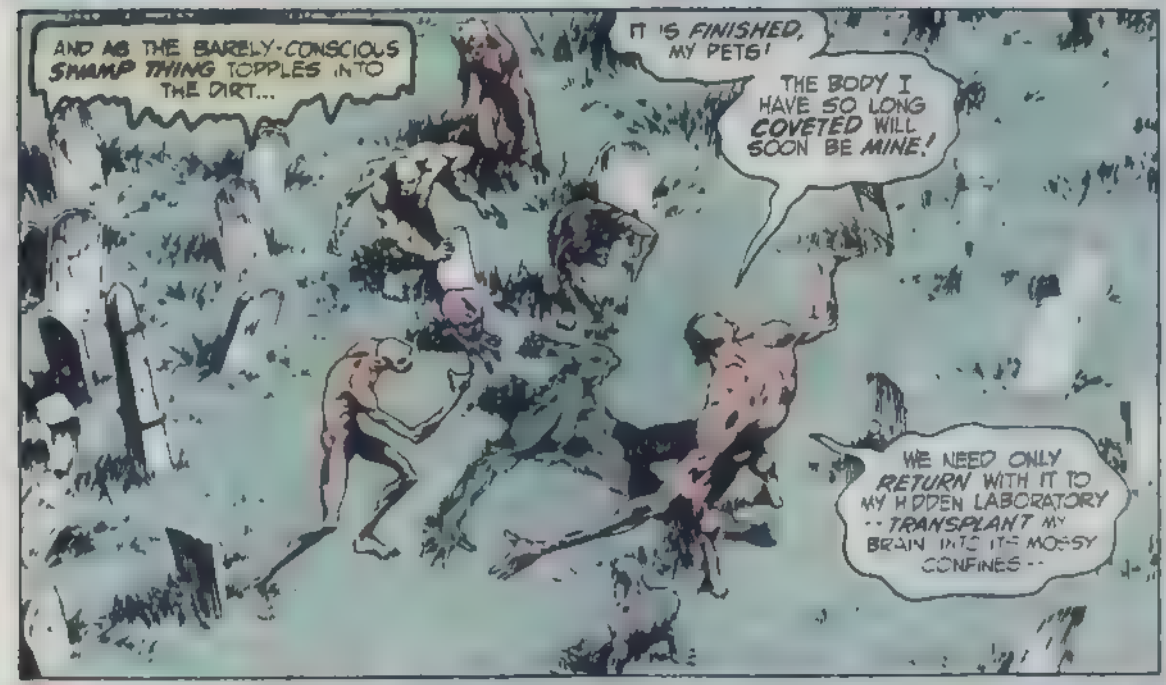

AGAIN THE WORD IS SPOKEN--AND THE WIND GROWS HARSHER STILL--
-- TS WHISPERED MOAN BECOMING MORE LIKE A MURMUR--

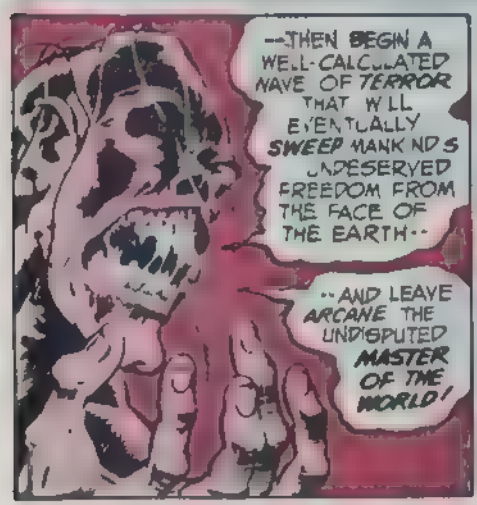

STOP STRUGGLING, DOCTOR--AND DIE!
IT'S REALLY FOR THE BEST, YOU KNOW!


THINK, HOLLAND--IMAGINE WHAT IT WILL BE LIKE TO EXIST IN MY WORLD--
--A WORLD WHERE MY EVERY WISH WILL BE A COMMAND--A WORLD WHERE ALL HUMANITY SHALL SERVE AS SLAVES TO MY POWER--


AND THE MURMURING GROWS DEEPER--COMING IN FRUSTRATED HOWLS--
16

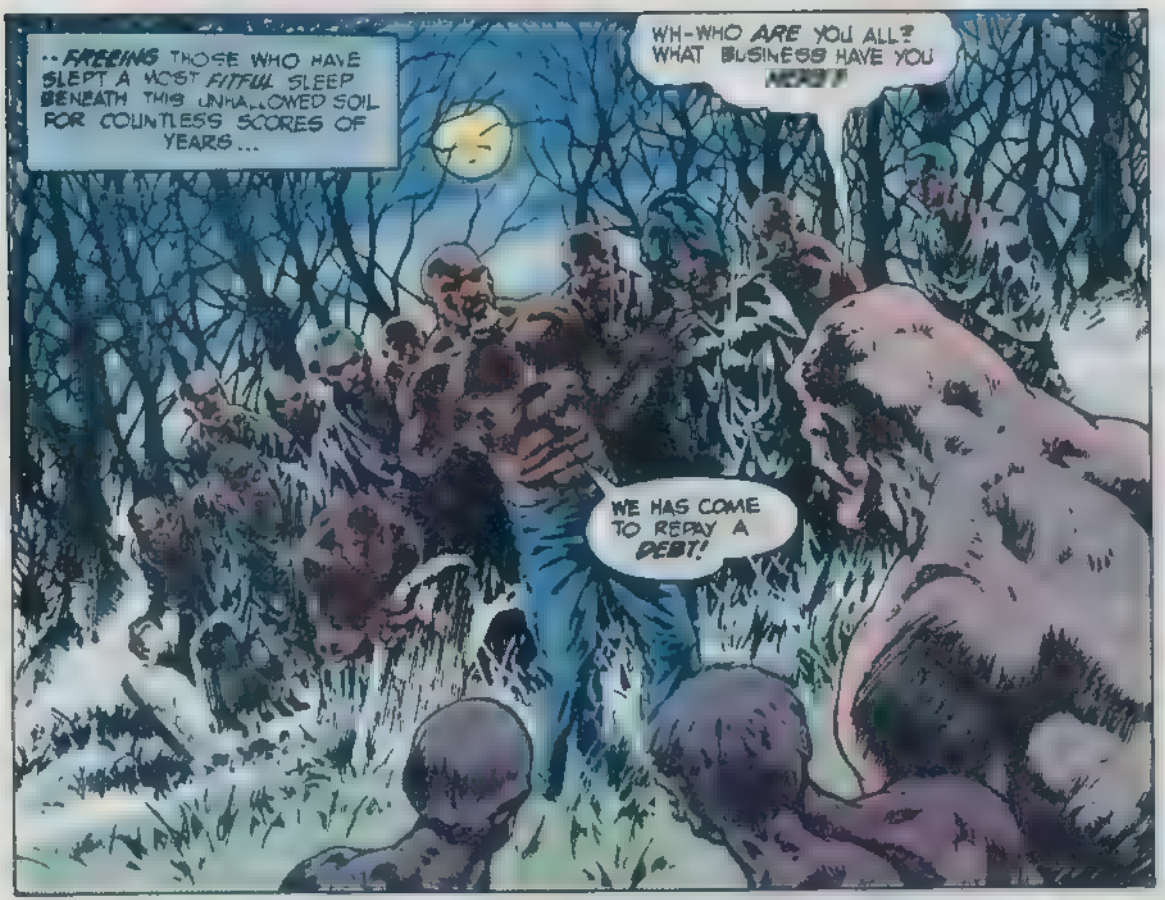

YOU SHOULD CONSIDER YOURSELF *FORTUNATE*, DOCTOR--
--THAT YOU WILL *NOT* BE AROUND TO *SEE* SUCH A WORLD!


AND AS THE BARELY-CONSCIOUS *SWAMP THING* TOPPLES INTO THE DIRT...
IT IS *FINISHED*, MY PETS!
THE BODY I HAVE SO LONG *COVETED* WILL SOON BE *MINE*!
WE NEED ONLY *RETURN* WITH IT TO MY HIDDEN LABORATORY --*TRANSPLANT* MY BRAIN INTO ITS MOSSY CONFINES--


--THEN BEGIN A WELL-CALCULATED *WAVE OF TERROR* THAT WILL EVENTUALLY *SWEEP* MANKIND'S UNDESERVED FREEDOM FROM THE FACE OF THE EARTH--
--AND LEAVE *ARCANE* THE UNDISPUTED *MASTER OF THE WORLD*!

AND WITH THAT THE WINDSWEPT *MOANS*-- THE GUSTY *MURMURINGS*--BECOME A MUFFLED *CRY* OF OUTRAGE AND DESPAIR--

--A SOUND EVEN THE MEGALOMANIACAL ARCANE AND HIS SYNTHETIC SERVANTS CANNOT LONG IGNORE...
THUS THEY STAND TRANSFIXED AS THE MOURNFUL CRY CONGEALS -- INTO THE ANGUISHED HYSTERICAL VOICES OF CREATURES NO LONGER TRULY OF THIS WORLD--
--VOICES THAT SCREAM OUT FOR THE RIGHTEOUS REVENGE SO MANY YEARS DENIED THEM--
--AND THE SCREAMING GROWS LOUDER, MORE DESPERATE-- TILL THE ANCIENT WOODEN HEADSTONES SEEM TO SHUDDER AT THE SOUND--
--TREMBLING IN MOCK FEAR OF WHAT THEY KNOW MUST SHORTLY COME..
THEN, A TOMBSTONE FALLS--
--AND ANOTHER QUICKLY FOLLOWS--
--AND, AT LAST, THE MUSTY CEMETERY GROUND ERUPTS IN UNNATURAL FURY--
--HURLING THE REMAINING HEADSTONES SKYWARD--SHRIVELING THE YELLOWED GRASS- SPEWING UP GREAT CHUNKS OF DECAYING DIRT--

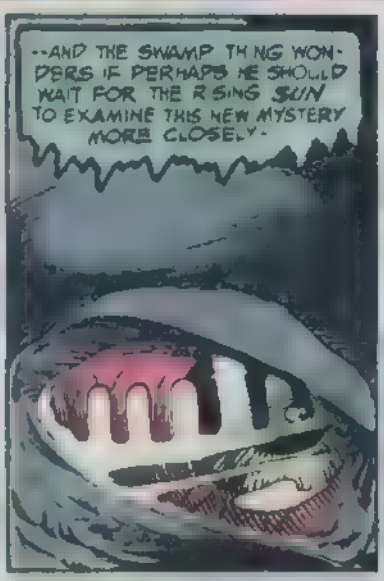

--FREEING THOSE WHO HAVE SLEPT A MOST FITFUL SLEEP BENEATH THIS UNHALLOWED SOIL FOR COUNTLESS SCORES OF YEARS...
WH-WHO ARE YOU ALL? WHAT BUSINESS HAVE YOU HERE?
WE HAS COME TO REPAY A DEBT!

THE BIG BLACK MAN GROWS SILENT THEN--AS HE AND HIS SOMBER COMPANIONS MOVE SLOWLY, HESITANTLY, FORWARD, THEIR DARK EYES ALMOST GLOWING IN ANTICIPATION--

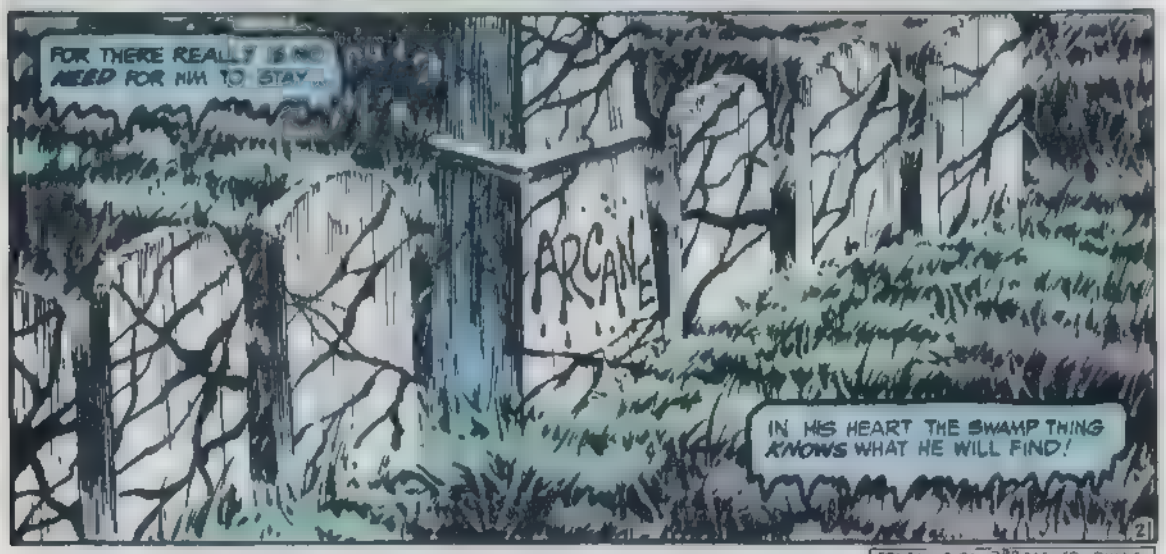
--AND ARCANE, IN TURN, WONDERS IF PERHAPS HIS OWN SYNTHETIC EYES HAVE SUDDENLY GONE FAULTY--FOR HE WOULD SWEAR HE CAN SEE CLEAR THROUGH THE GRIM-VISAGED THRONG APPROACHING HIM--

--AND THE SWAMP THING? HIS MOSS-HOODED EYES GO WIDE IN SURPRISE--AS HE REMEMBERS THE TALE HE'D HEARD SCANT MINUTES BEFORE--OF A GREAT BLACK GIANT WHO'D DIED AT THE STAKE--
--A GIANT WITH ONLY ONE ARM!

ARCANE AND HIS MINIONS HAVE NOT HEARD THE TALE OF BLACK JUBAL'S SWORN VENGEANCE -- BUT EVEN THEY CAN RECOGNIZE THE SPECTRAL COMPANY'S INTENTIONS --
--SO THEY ATTEMPT TO RUN--AN INSTANT TOO LATE!
AND AS THE MOSS-ENCRUSTED WITNESS TO THIS SCENE OF SUPERNATURAL INSANITY ATTEMPTS TO RISE
NO, M'FRIEND THIS HAS MOTHIN' TA DO WIT YOU...
SO SLEEP. SLEEP.
AT THAT, THE RHEUMY EYES CLOSE -- THE MOSS-ENCUMBERED HEAD LOLLS BACK -- AND THE MAN-BRUTE SLEEPS --
--AND SLEEPING DREAMS- OF LABORATORY EXPLOSIONS AND ALL EMBRACING SWAMPS -- OF HIDEOUS TRANSFORMATIONS AND RESENTFUL RESURRECTIONS --
--OF ALL THE TERRIBLE THINGS THAT HAVE MADE HIS LIFE THE HORROR IT IS TODAY --
--BUT EVEN SO, THE HORROR THE SWAMP THING DREAMS IS AS NOTHING COMPARED TO THE HORRORS HE WOULD SEE HAD HE NOT SO MERCIFULLY BEEN PUT TO REST --
--FOR THE SCREAMING S LOUD AND LONG AND FRIGHTEN NG --
--AND LACED WITH MAN ACAL LAUGHTER THAT SENDS SNAKES SKITTERING AWAY INTO THE UNDER-BRUSH -- NIGHT-BIRDS SAILING OFF INTO AN ANGRY SKY --
--UNTIL, AT LAST, THE SCREAMING STOPS!



HE WONDERS THIS FOR ONLY AN INSTANT THEN SANITY PREVAILS-
--AND HE TURNS AWAY, SHAMBLING OFF INTO THE MISTY HALFLIGHT OF MORNING...



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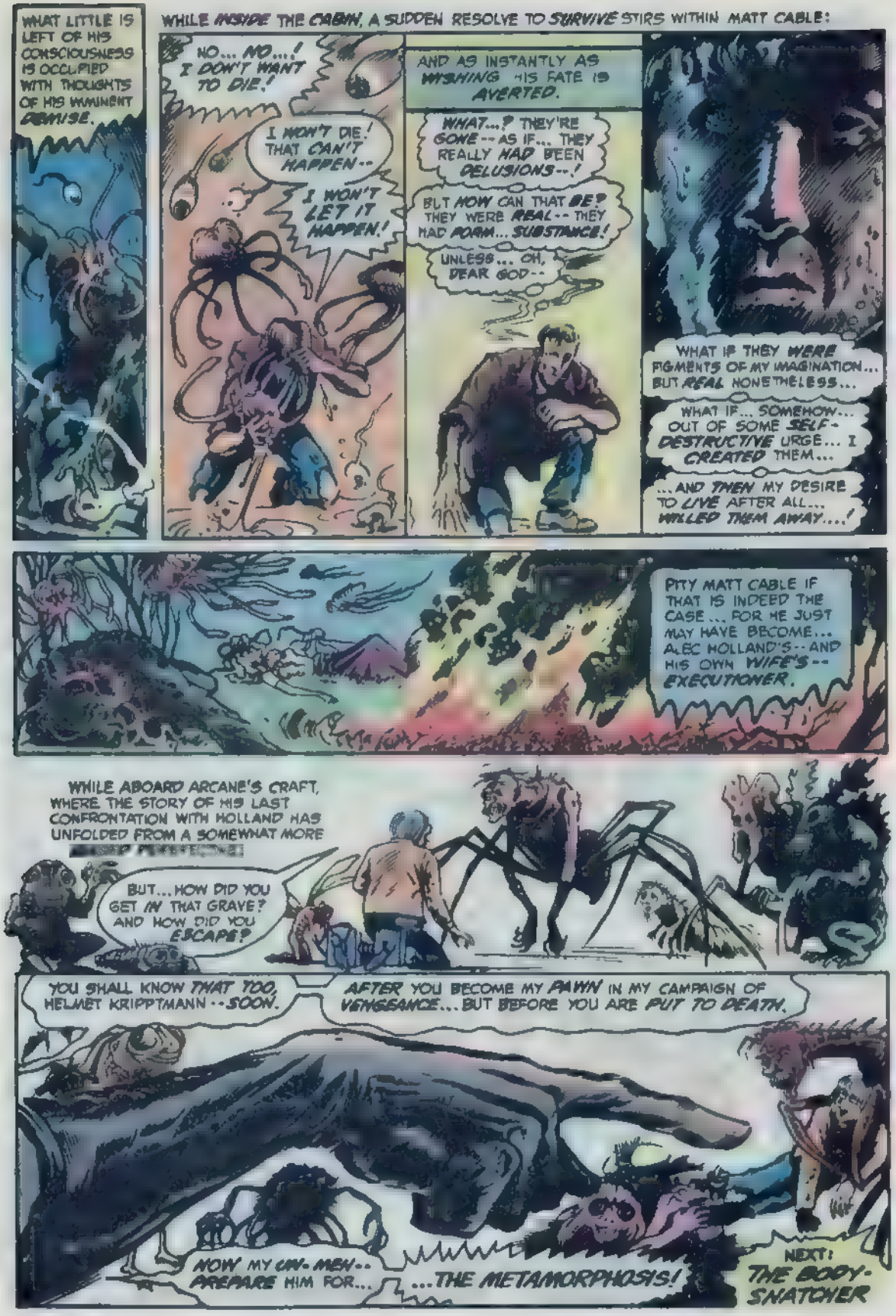
EPILOGUE: DAWN IS IN FULL BLOOM WHEN THE SHAMBLING SWAMP BRUTE AT LAST FINDS HIS WAY BACK TO THE CLEARING WHERE A CERTAIN ANCIENT WOMAN HAD SAT THE NIGHT BEFORE...
ONLY TO FIND SHE IS--
... GONE.. THE SHACK THE CAULDRON.. AUNTIE BELLUM... ALL OF THEM...
GONE .
...THIS *IS* THE RIGHT CLEARING.. I RECOGNIZE THE FOLIAGE... BUT
...IN GOD'S NAME .. WHAT HAPPENED TO THE *HOUSE* THAT WAS HERE... LAST NIGHT..?
HAVE I GONE *MAD*...? DID I IMAGINE .IT ALL HAPPENED. ?
SUNLIGHT. GLINTING OFF SOMETHING IN THE BUSHES.. COULD IT BE HER CAULDRON OR...?
EAGERLY, THE SWAMP THING TEARS THE FOLIAGE ASIDE TO REVEAL...
... A GRAVESTONE... AND THAT INSCRIPTION "ELSBETH BELLUM"...
ELSBETH BELLUM
BLACK JUBAL'S ELSBETH, I'M CERTAIN..! SO *THAT'S* WHY SHE HAD NOWHERE ELSE TO GO...
THEN ..SHE WASN'T HERE LAST NIGHT IT *WAS* ALL A DREAM.
ELSBE
BELLUM
I HAVE TO KEEP TELLING MYSELF THAT... IT WAS ONLY A *DREAM*..
.. AND MAYBE SOME DAY .I'LL MAKE MYSELF *BELIEVE* IT!
HE *NEVER DID* CONVINCE HIMSELF THAT HE *HAD* DREAMED WHAT HE'D SEEN. BUT HE NEVER SAW OR HEARD OF ARCANE AGAIN *EITHER*.
NOT THAT *ANY* OF THAT COULD MATTER TO ALEC HOLLAND *NOW*.
ARCANE IS THE *FURTHEST* THING FROM HIS


WHAT LITTLE IS LEFT OF HIS CONSCIOUSNESS IS OCCUPIED WITH THOUGHTS OF HIS IMMINENT DEMISE.
WHILE INSIDE THE CABIN, A SUDDEN RESOLVE TO SURVIVE STIRS WITHIN MATT CABLE:
NO... NO...! I DON'T WANT TO DIE!
I WON'T DIE! THAT CAN'T HAPPEN--
I WON'T LET IT HAPPEN!
AND AS INSTANTLY AS WISHING HIS FATE IS AVERTED.
WHAT...? THEY'RE GONE -- AS IF... THEY REALLY HAD BEEN DELUSIONS--!
BUT HOW CAN THAT BE? THEY WERE REAL -- THEY HAD FORM... SUBSTANCE!
UNLESS... OH, DEAR GOD--
WHAT IF THEY WERE FIGMENTS OF MY IMAGINATION... BUT REAL NONETHELESS...
WHAT IF... SOMEHOW... OUT OF SOME SELF-DESTRUCTIVE URGE... I CREATED THEM...
...AND THEN MY DESIRE TO LIVE AFTER ALL... WILLED THEM AWAY...!
PITY MATT CABLE IF THAT IS INDEED THE CASE... FOR HE JUST MAY HAVE BECOME... ALEC HOLLAND'S -- AND HIS OWN WIFE'S -- EXECUTIONER.
WHILE ABOARD ARCANE'S CRAFT, WHERE THE STORY OF HIS LAST CONFRONTATION WITH HOLLAND HAS UNFOLDED FROM A SOMEWHAT MORE
BUT... HOW DID YOU GET IN THAT GRAVE? AND HOW DID YOU ESCAPE?
YOU SHALL KNOW THAT TOO, HELMET KRIPPTMANN -- SOON.
AFTER YOU BECOME MY PAWN IN MY CAMPAIGN OF VENGEANCE... BUT BEFORE YOU ARE PUT TO DEATH.
NOW MY UN-MEN... PREPARE HIM FOR...
...THE METAMORPHOSIS!
NEXT! THE BODY-SNATCHER

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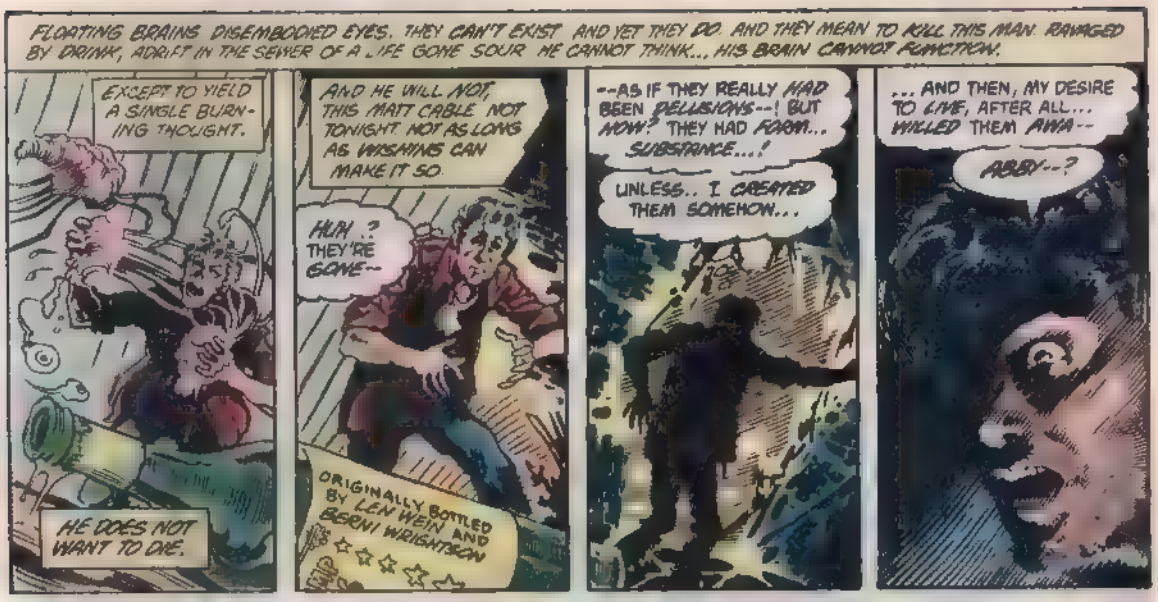
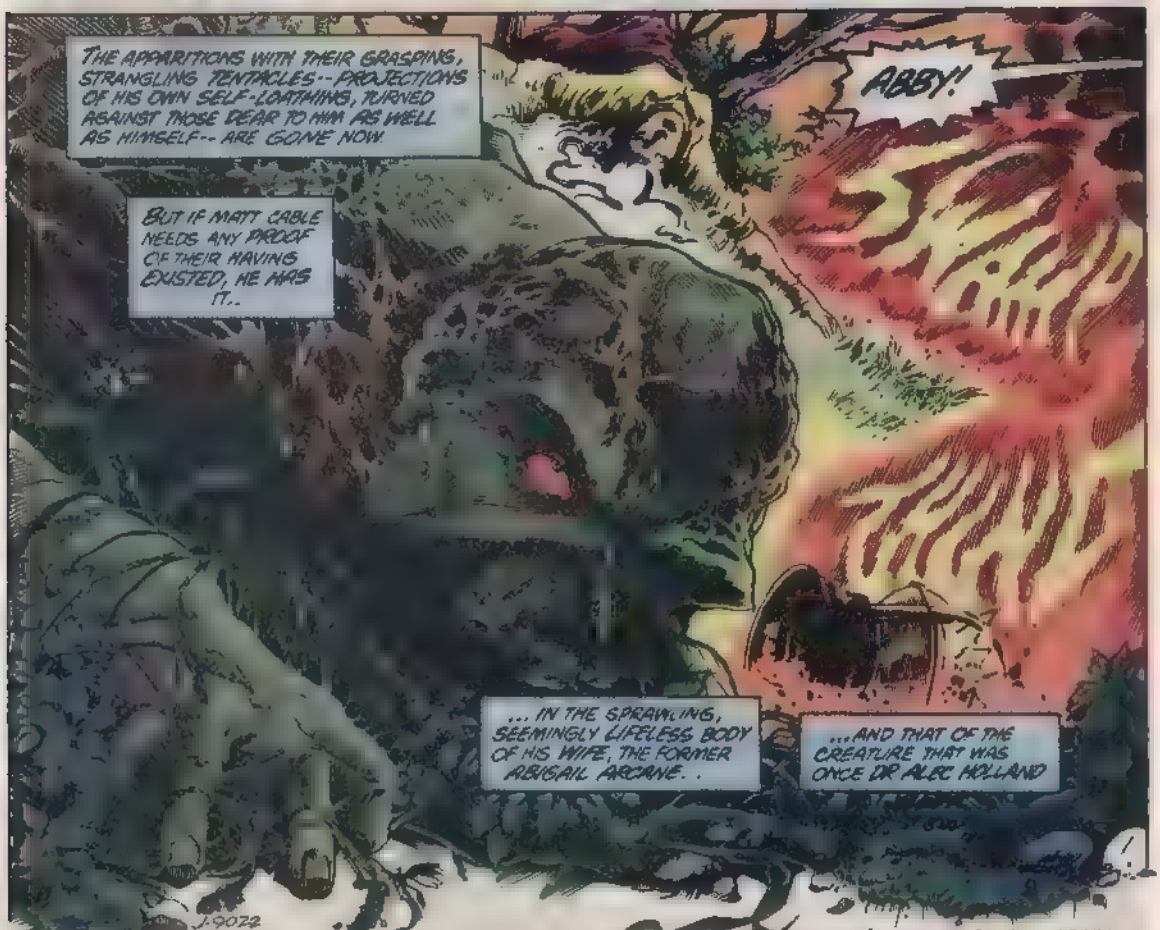

FLOATING BRAINS DISEMBODIED EYES. THEY CAN'T EXIST AND YET THEY DO. AND THEY MEAN TO KILL THIS MAN. RAVAGED BY DRINK, ADRIFT IN THE SEWER OF A LIFE GONE SOUR HE CANNOT THINK... HIS BRAIN CANNOT FUNCTION.
EXCEPT TO YIELD A SINGLE BURNING THOUGHT.
HE DOES NOT WANT TO DIE.
AND HE WILL NOT, THIS MATT CABLE NOT TONIGHT NOT AS LONG AS WISHING CAN MAKE IT SO.
HUH..? THEY'RE GONE--
ORIGINALLY BOTTLED BY LEN WEIN AND BERNI WRIGHTSON
--AS IF THEY REALLY HAD BEEN DELUSIONS--! BUT NOW? THEY HAD FORM... SUBSTANCE...!
UNLESS.. I CREATED THEM SOMEHOW...
... AND THEN, MY DESIRE TO LIVE, AFTER ALL... WILLED THEM AWA--
ABBY--?


THE APPARITIONS WITH THEIR GRASPING, STRANGLING TENTACLES--PROJECTIONS OF HIS OWN SELF-LOATHING, TURNED AGAINST THOSE DEAR TO HIM AS WELL AS HIMSELF-- ARE GONE NOW
BUT IF MATT CABLE NEEDS ANY PROOF OF THEIR HAVING EXISTED, HE HAS IT..
ABBY!
... IN THE SPRAWLING, SEEMINGLY LIFELESS BODY OF HIS WIFE, THE FORMER ABIGAIL ARCANE..
...AND THAT OF THE CREATURE THAT WAS ONCE DR ALEC HOLLAND
J.9022

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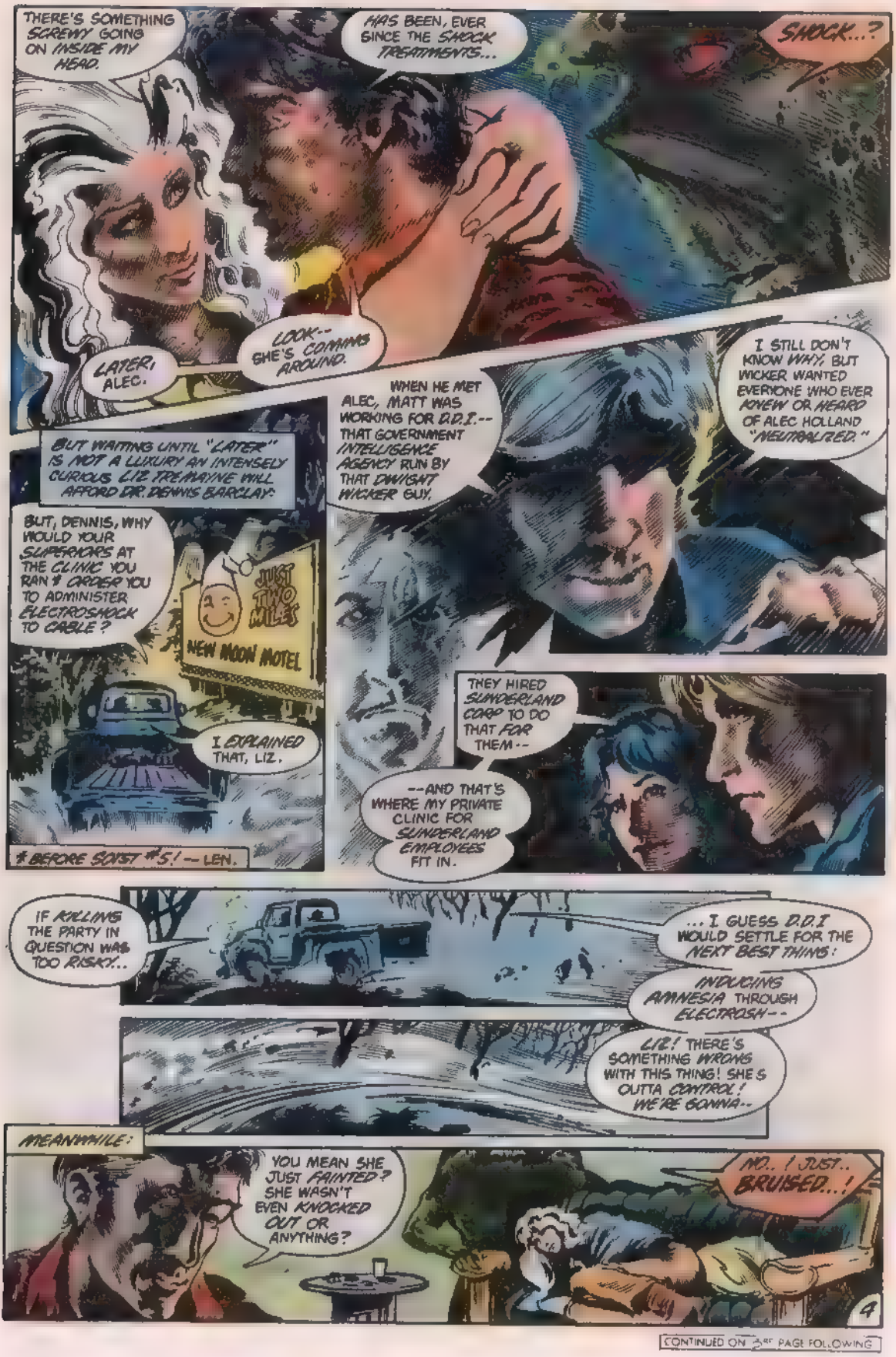
THAT OVERTURNED LAMP.. IT STARTED A FIRE...!
CAN'T.. GET TO HER...'
CAN'T DO ANYTHING.. BUT ALEC MIGHT BE ABLE TO..'
.. IF THERE WAS SOME WAY I COULD WAKE HIM ..'
AND, DEEP INSIDE HIS MUDDLED BRAIN -- SO FAR HE CANNOT HEAR ITS MESSAGE, ONLY FEEL IT -- AN URGE THROBS LIKE A DRUM-BEAT: WAKE HIM.. WAKE HIM.. WAKE HIM ..
FROM THAT SAME DEPTH WITHIN MATT CABLE'S SKULL, SOMETHING STIRS...
.. AND EMERGES A SHAPE AS STRANGE AND UNKNOWABLE AS THE SECRETS MEN KEEP FROM THEMSELVES.
FINGERS WITHOUT FLESH. A HAND THAT IS NOT A HAND GRASPS THE SWAMP THING'S SHOULDER
RED EYES SNAP OPEN.
AND THE CREATURE IS REPELLED BY THE REFLEXES OF A MONSTER THAT HAS MANY TIMES BEEN RUDELY AWAKENED.
BENEATH THE POWER OF THE SUDDEN ONSLAUGHT, THE THING SIMPLY... BREAKS.
2

FULL WAKEFULNESS COMES A MOMENT LATER
WHAT...?
LAST THING I REMEMBER, THOSE CREATURES. WHERE'S .. ABBY.
THERE...! BUT SHE'S... OUT COLD..!
GOT TO FIND SOMETHING...TO PUT OUT THAT BLAZE. WAIT.. THAT BLANKET...!
NO GOOD.!
IT'S .. ON FIRE TOO. !
THAT LEAVES JUST ONE THING' ME.!
MADE IT. ! I'LL HAVE SOME.. HEALING TO DO BUT AT LEAST.. ABBY'S SAFE..!
. AND THE HOPE THAT THESE MOSSY "BONES" ARE STILL DAMP ENOUGH. TO DO THE JOB.. !
A HISSING . LIKE THE CATCALLS OF DEMONS. AND THEN, ONLY THE HARSH BITE OF ACRID SMOKE IN HIS EYES AND MOUTH AND LUNGS.
ALEC... THOSE CREATURES-- I THINK I'M RESPONSIBLE FOR THEM THAT'S WHY THE FIRST ONE ATTACKED DR. BARCLAY *
...AND THE LAST ONE HELPED YOU SAVE ABBY..!
* IN SOTST #17! -- LEN.
I... CREATE THEM SOMEHOW-- SUBCONSCIOUSLY! THEY'RE "ACTUALIZATIONS" OF WHATEVER INTENSE EMOTION I'M FEELING.
BUT HOW...?!
I... I'M NOT SURE...
3


THERE'S SOMETHING SCREWY GOING ON INSIDE MY HEAD.
HAS BEEN, EVER SINCE THE SHOCK TREATMENTS...
SHOCK...?
LATER, ALEC.
LOOK-- SHE'S COMING AROUND.
I STILL DON'T KNOW WHY, BUT WICKER WANTED EVERYONE WHO EVER KNEW OR HEARD OF ALEC HOLLAND "NEUTRALIZED."
WHEN HE MET ALEC, MATT WAS WORKING FOR D.D.I.-- THAT GOVERNMENT INTELLIGENCE AGENCY RUN BY THAT DWIGHT WICKER GUY.
BUT WAITING UNTIL "LATER" IS NOT A LUXURY AN INTENSELY CURIOUS LIZ TREMAYNE WILL AFFORD DR. DENNIS BARCLAY:
BUT, DENNIS, WHY WOULD YOUR SUPERIORS AT THE CLINIC YOU RAN * ORDER YOU TO ADMINISTER ELECTROSHOCK TO CABLE?
JUST TWO MILES
NEW MOON MOTEL
I EXPLAINED THAT, LIZ.
THEY HIRED SUNDERLAND CORP TO DO THAT FOR THEM--
--AND THAT'S WHERE MY PRIVATE CLINIC FOR SUNDERLAND EMPLOYEES FIT IN.
* BEFORE SOTST #5! -- LEN.
IF KILLING THE PARTY IN QUESTION WAS TOO RISKY...
... I GUESS D.D.I WOULD SETTLE FOR THE NEXT BEST THING:
INDUCING AMNESIA THROUGH ELECTROSH--
LIZ! THERE'S SOMETHING WRONG WITH THIS THING! SHE'S OUTTA CONTROL! WE'RE GONNA--
MEANWHILE:
YOU MEAN SHE JUST FAINTED? SHE WASN'T EVEN KNOCKED OUT OR ANYTHING?
NO.. I JUST.. BRUISED...!
4

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SLOWLY, HALTINGLY, HOLLAND REMINDS THE NOW-CLEARHEADED CABLE OF HIS PROMISE TO EXPLAIN HIS CRYPTIC EARLIER REMARK
ALL RIGHT, ALEC I WILL I TOLD YOU ABOUT WICKER AND D.D.I # I DIDN'T TELL YOU EXACTLY WHAT HE DID TO ME.
SOME TIME AFTER I THOUGHT 'THE HOLLAND PROJECT" HAD BEEN TERMINATED..
IN SCRIPT #.? --LEN
".. WICKER SENT ME ON ASSIGNMENT TO SOUTH DAKOTA.
"I WAS TOLD TO MEET A SPECIAL COURIER THERE.
"WHAT I WASN'T TOLD WAS THAT THE 'ASSIGNMENT' WAS AN AMBUSH!..
"... A TRAP!"
THEY SLIPPED A STRAITJACKET ON ME...
...AND THE NEXT THING I KNEW
...I WAS GETTING A 100-VOLT "EYE-OPENER" AT THE BARCLAY CLINIC!
HOLLAND CAN ONLY EXPRESS HIS AMAZEMENT AT THE WAY A FRIEND OF THE PAST HAD CROSSED PATHS WITH A FRIEND OF THE PRESENT
BUT WHAT WOULD BE MADE OF THE SCENE NEAR WHERE AN ALLY OF THE PRESENT HAS BECOME THE CAPTIVE OF AN ENEMY FROM THE PAST?
ARCANE!--
WHY ARE YOU DOING THIS?
IN TIME, MY DEAR KRIPPTMANN
NOW, MY NEW UN-MEN-- PREPARE HIM FOR... THE METAMORPHOSIS!
WHAT DO YOU WANT WITH ME?
5

AND THE MEEK SHALL INHERIT...

I DOUBT, KRIPPTMANN, THAT YOU TRULY WISH TO KNOW WHY MY UN-MEN ARE SPINNING THAT... COCOON ABOUT YOU.

WHY YOU ARE SOON TO DIE -- OR, AT LEAST, WHY WHAT YOU THINK OF AS HELMUT KRIPPTMANN SHALL SOON CEASE TO EXIST.

I HAVE FOUND THAT A MAN HOPES THAT, IF HE MUST DIE PREMATURELY, HIS DEATH SHALL HAVE MEANING.

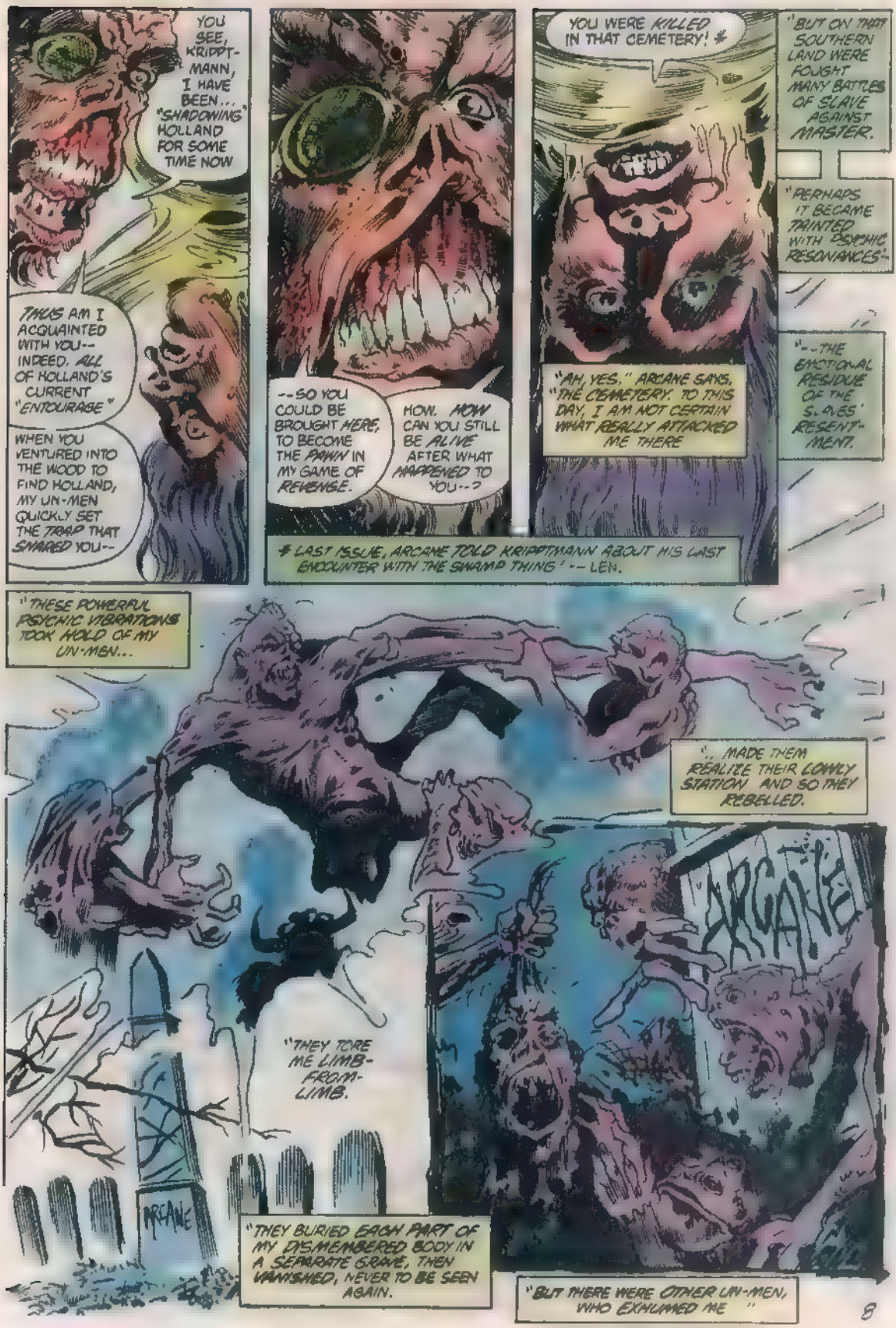
AND YOURS SHALL -- BUT NOT TO YOU. IT SHALL MEAN THAT I WILL HAVE AVENGED THE NAME OF ARCANE AGAINST HER WHO IS NOT FIT TO SPEAK IT.

IT SHALL MEAN THAT ONCE AND FOR ALL, I WILL POSSESS THE SWAMP THING'S STRONG, POWERFUL BODY...

...AND HAVE MY REVENGE AGAINST ALEC HOLLAND FOR DOOMING ME TO MY CURRENT, MISSHAPEN FORM --

-- BY TRAPPING HIM WITHIN THAT FORM!

a MARTIN PASKO STEPHEN R BISSETTE JOHN TOTLEBEN LEN WEIN presentation
SCRIPTER -- CO-PLOTTERS -- PENCILLER INKER EDITOR
assisted by: TATJANA WOOD, COLORIST · JOHN COSTANZA, LETTERER


YOU SEE, KRIPPT-MANN, I HAVE BEEN... "SHADOWING" HOLLAND FOR SOME TIME NOW
THUS AM I ACQUAINTED WITH YOU-- INDEED, ALL OF HOLLAND'S CURRENT "ENTOURAGE"
WHEN YOU VENTURED INTO THE WOOD TO FIND HOLLAND, MY UN-MEN QUICKLY SET THE TRAP THAT SNARED YOU--
--SO YOU COULD BE BROUGHT HERE, TO BECOME THE PAWN IN MY GAME OF REVENGE.
HOW. HOW CAN YOU STILL BE ALIVE AFTER WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU--?
YOU WERE KILLED IN THAT CEMETERY! #
"AH, YES," ARCANE SAYS, "THE CEMETERY. TO THIS DAY, I AM NOT CERTAIN WHAT REALLY ATTACKED ME THERE
"BUT ON THAT SOUTHERN LAND WERE FOUGHT MANY BATTLES OF SLAVE AGAINST MASTER.
"PERHAPS IT BECAME TAINTED WITH PSYCHIC RESONANCES--
"--THE EMOTIONAL RESIDUE OF THE SLAVES' RESENT-MENT.
LAST ISSUE, ARCANE TOLD KRIPPTMANN ABOUT HIS LAST ENCOUNTER WITH THE SWAMP THING' -- LEN.
"THESE POWERFUL PSYCHIC VIBRATIONS TOOK HOLD OF MY UN-MEN...
"... MADE THEM REALIZE THEIR LOWLY STATION AND SO THEY REBELLED.
"THEY TORE ME LIMB-FROM-LIMB.
"THEY BURIED EACH PART OF MY DISMEMBERED BODY IN A SEPARATE GRAVE, THEN VANISHED, NEVER TO BE SEEN AGAIN.
"BUT THERE WERE OTHER UN-MEN, WHO EXHUMED ME ..."
ARCANE
ARCANE
8
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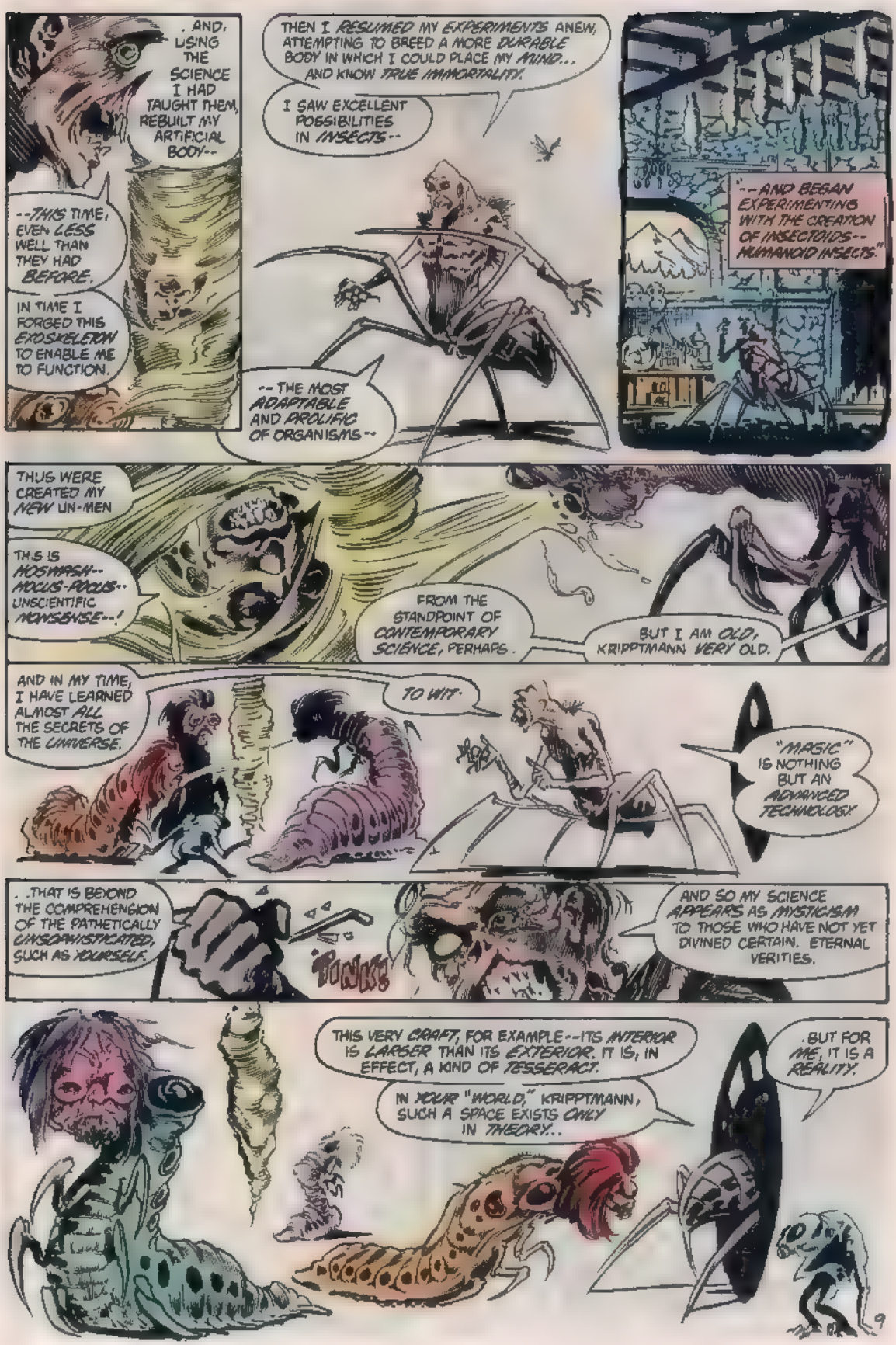
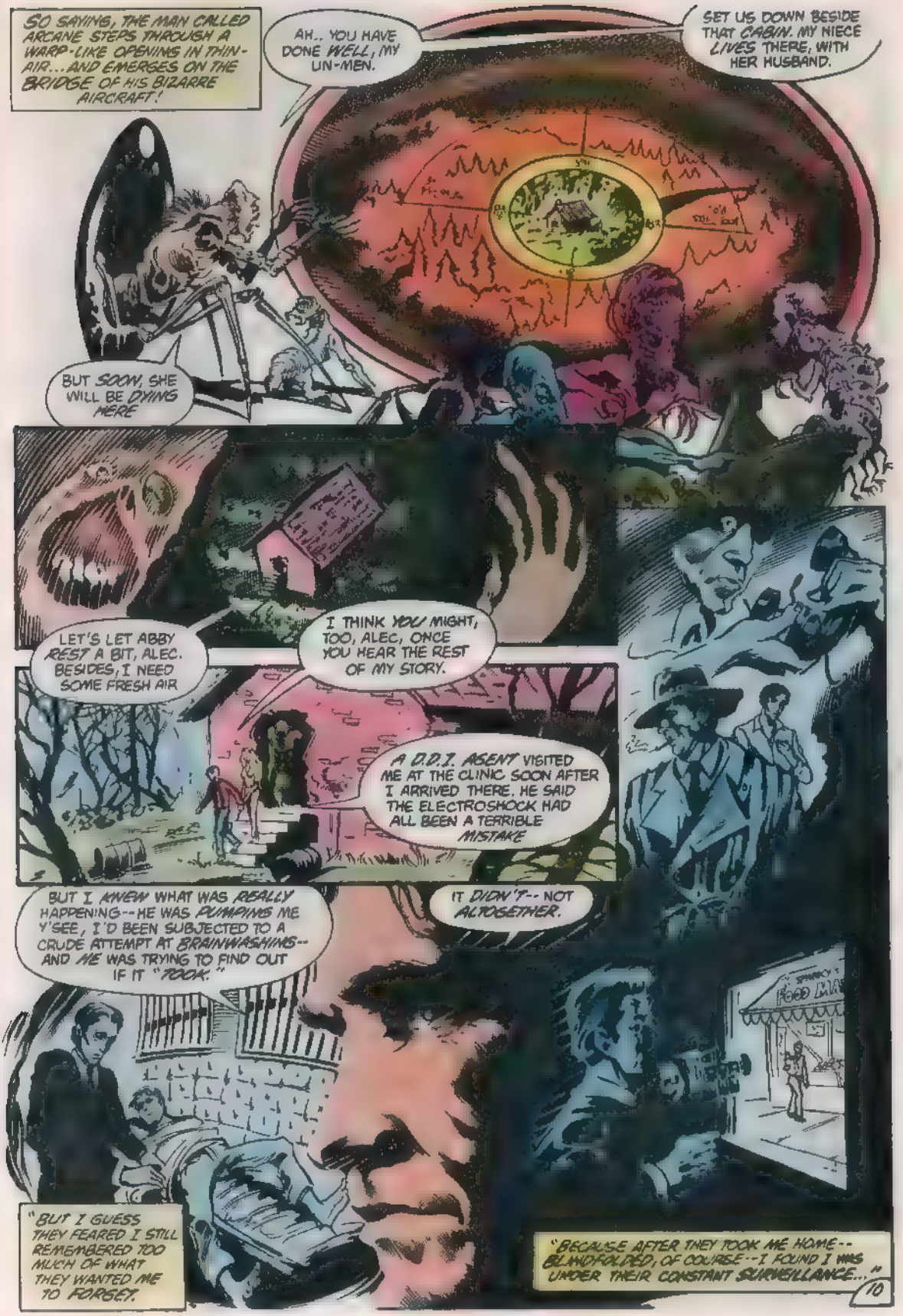
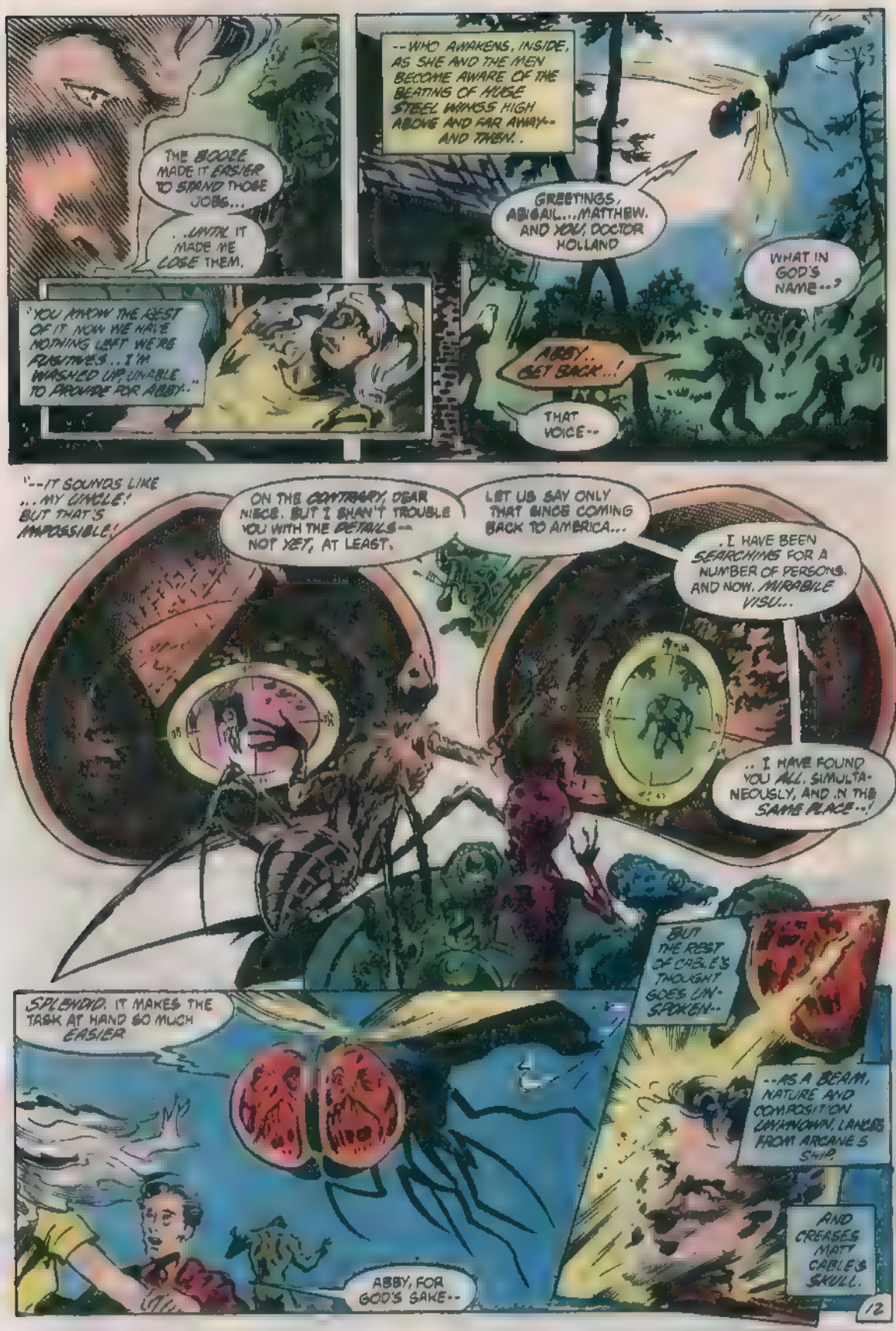

. AND, USING THE SCIENCE I HAD TAUGHT THEM, REBUILT MY ARTIFICIAL BODY--
--THIS TIME, EVEN LESS WELL THAN THEY HAD BEFORE.
IN TIME I FORGED THIS EXOSKELETON TO ENABLE ME TO FUNCTION.
THEN I RESUMED MY EXPERIMENTS ANEW, ATTEMPTING TO BREED A MORE DURABLE BODY IN WHICH I COULD PLACE MY MIND... AND KNOW TRUE IMMORTALITY.
I SAW EXCELLENT POSSIBILITIES IN INSECTS--
--THE MOST ADAPTABLE AND PROLIFIC OF ORGANISMS--
"--AND BEGAN EXPERIMENTING WITH THE CREATION OF INSECTOIDS--HUMANOID INSECTS."
THUS WERE CREATED MY NEW UN-MEN
THIS IS MOSIMPSH--HOCUS-POCUS--UNSCIENTIFIC NONSENSE--!
FROM THE STANDPOINT OF CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE, PERHAPS..
BUT I AM OLD, KRIPPTMANN. VERY OLD.
AND IN MY TIME, I HAVE LEARNED ALMOST ALL THE SECRETS OF THE UNIVERSE.
TO WIT:
"MAGIC" IS NOTHING BUT AN ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY.
..THAT IS BEYOND THE COMPREHENSION OF THE PATHETICALLY UNSOPHISTICATED, SUCH AS YOURSELF.
TONK!
AND SO MY SCIENCE APPEARS AS MYSTICISM TO THOSE WHO HAVE NOT YET DIVINED CERTAIN ETERNAL VERITIES.
THIS VERY CRAFT, FOR EXAMPLE--ITS INTERIOR IS LARGER THAN ITS EXTERIOR. IT IS, IN EFFECT, A KIND OF TESSERACT.
IN YOUR "WORLD," KRIPPTMANN, SUCH A SPACE EXISTS ONLY IN THEORY...
..BUT FOR ME, IT IS A REALITY.
9


SO SAYING, THE MAN CALLED ARCANE STEPS THROUGH A WARP-LIKE OPENING IN THIN-AIR... AND EMERGES ON THE BRIDGE OF HIS BIZARRE AIRCRAFT!
AH.. YOU HAVE DONE WELL, MY UN-MEN.
SET US DOWN BESIDE THAT CABIN. MY NIECE LIVES THERE, WITH HER HUSBAND.
BUT SOON, SHE WILL BE DYING HERE
LET'S LET ABBY REST A BIT, ALEC. BESIDES, I NEED SOME FRESH AIR
I THINK YOU MIGHT, TOO, ALEC, ONCE YOU HEAR THE REST OF MY STORY.
A D.D.I. AGENT VISITED ME AT THE CLINIC SOON AFTER I ARRIVED THERE. HE SAID THE ELECTROSHOCK HAD ALL BEEN A TERRIBLE MISTAKE
BUT I KNEW WHAT WAS REALLY HAPPENING--HE WAS PUMPING ME Y'SEE, I'D BEEN SUBJECTED TO A CRUDE ATTEMPT AT BRAINWASHING-- AND ME WAS TRYING TO FIND OUT IF IT "TOOK."
IT DIDN'T-- NOT ALTOGETHER.
"BUT I GUESS THEY FEARED I STILL REMEMBERED TOO MUCH OF WHAT THEY WANTED ME TO FORGET.
"BECAUSE AFTER THEY TOOK ME HOME-- BLINDFOLDED, OF COURSE--I FOUND I WAS UNDER THEIR CONSTANT SURVEILLANCE..."

"MAYBE THEY WERE SMARTER THAN I'D THOUGHT, ALL ALONG," SAYS MATT.
"MAYBE THEY DID KNOW WHAT SHAPE I'D BEEN LEFT IN BY WHAT BARCLAY HAD DONE"
ABBY'S CONDITION MAY REQUIRE TREATMENT, LIZ AND I'M STILL A DOCTOR DAMMIT-- I HAVE AN OATH TO UPHOLD! I CAN'T JUST SIT HERE--
WHAT CHOICE DO WE HAVE? THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO TILL DAYBREAK--
AFTER I GET MY MEDICAL BAG FROM THE MOTEL, I'LL CALL AN ALL-NIGHT CHEMIST--
DENNIS, NO-- PLEASE DON'T LEAVE ME HERE!
LIZ, I HAVE TO DO THIS PLEASE TRY TO UNDER-STAND--
I DO. IT'S NOT YOUR DEDICATION PUSHING YOU OUT THAT DOOR--
--IT'S YOUR GUILT OVER MATT
OKAY BUT WHY SHOULDN'T I FEEL GUILTY? I RUINED HIS LIFE--
DON'T YOU SEE, LIZ? I'VE GOT TO GO
--I MIGHT JUST AS WELL HAVE KILLED HIM!
ABBY AND I "DROPPED OUT," ALEC WE MOVED FROM CITY TO CITY--
--EACH TIME HOPING TO START NEW LIVES.
TO SALVAGE WHAT LITTLE'S LEFT OF MY SELF-RESPECT
BUT IT WAS HOPELESS YOU SEE, THE ELECTRO-SHOCK DID BURN OUT MUCH OF WHAT I KNEW--
"I ENDED UP HAVING TO TAKE A SUCCESSION OF MENIAL, BADLY-PAYING JOBS JUST TO SURVIVE"
11


THE BOOZE MADE IT EASIER TO STAND THOSE JOBS...
...UNTIL IT MADE ME LOSE THEM.
"YOU KNOW THE REST OF IT. NOW WE HAVE NOTHING LEFT. WE'RE FUGITIVES... I'M WASHED UP, UNABLE TO PROVIDE FOR ABBY..."
--WHO AWAKENS, INSIDE, AS SHE AND THE MEN BECOME AWARE OF THE BEATING OF HUGE STEEL WINGS HIGH ABOVE AND FAR AWAY-- AND THEN..
GREETINGS, ABIGAIL...MATTHEW. AND YOU, DOCTOR HOLLAND
WHAT IN GOD'S NAME--?
ABBY... GET BACK..!
THAT VOICE--
"--IT SOUNDS LIKE ...MY UNCLE! BUT THAT'S IMPOSSIBLE!
ON THE CONTRARY, DEAR NIECE. BUT I SHAN'T TROUBLE YOU WITH THE DETAILS-- NOT YET, AT LEAST.
LET US SAY ONLY THAT SINCE COMING BACK TO AMERICA...
...I HAVE BEEN SEARCHING FOR A NUMBER OF PERSONS. AND NOW, MIRABILE VISU...
...I HAVE FOUND YOU ALL, SIMULTANEOUSLY, AND IN THE SAME PLACE--!
SPLENDID. IT MAKES THE TASK AT HAND SO MUCH EASIER
BUT THE REST OF CABLE'S THOUGHT GOES UNSPOKEN--
--AS A BEAM, NATURE AND COMPOSITION UNKNOWN, LANCES FROM ARCANE'S SHIP
AND CREASES MATT CABLE'S SKULL.
ABBY, FOR GOD'S SAKE--
12

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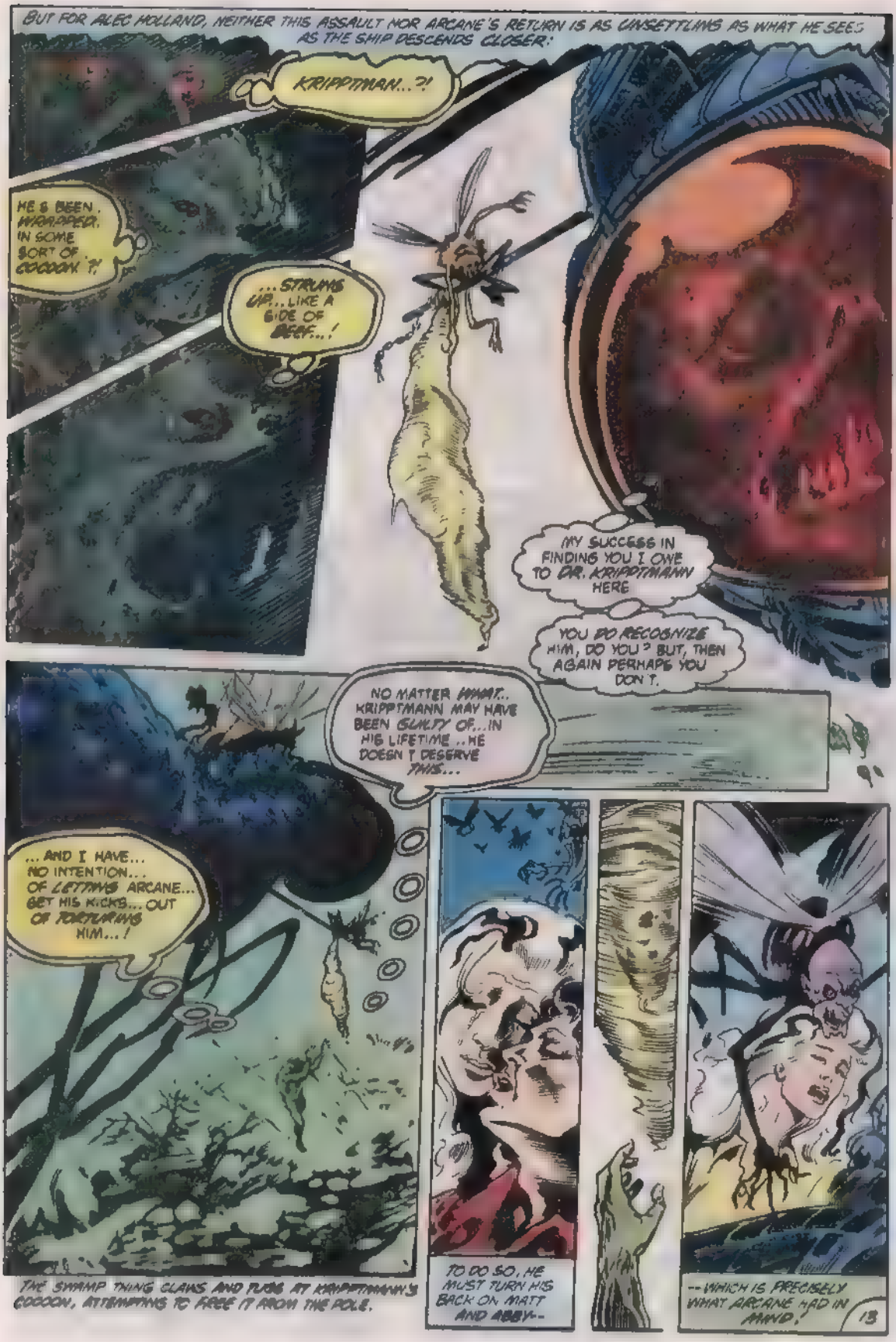
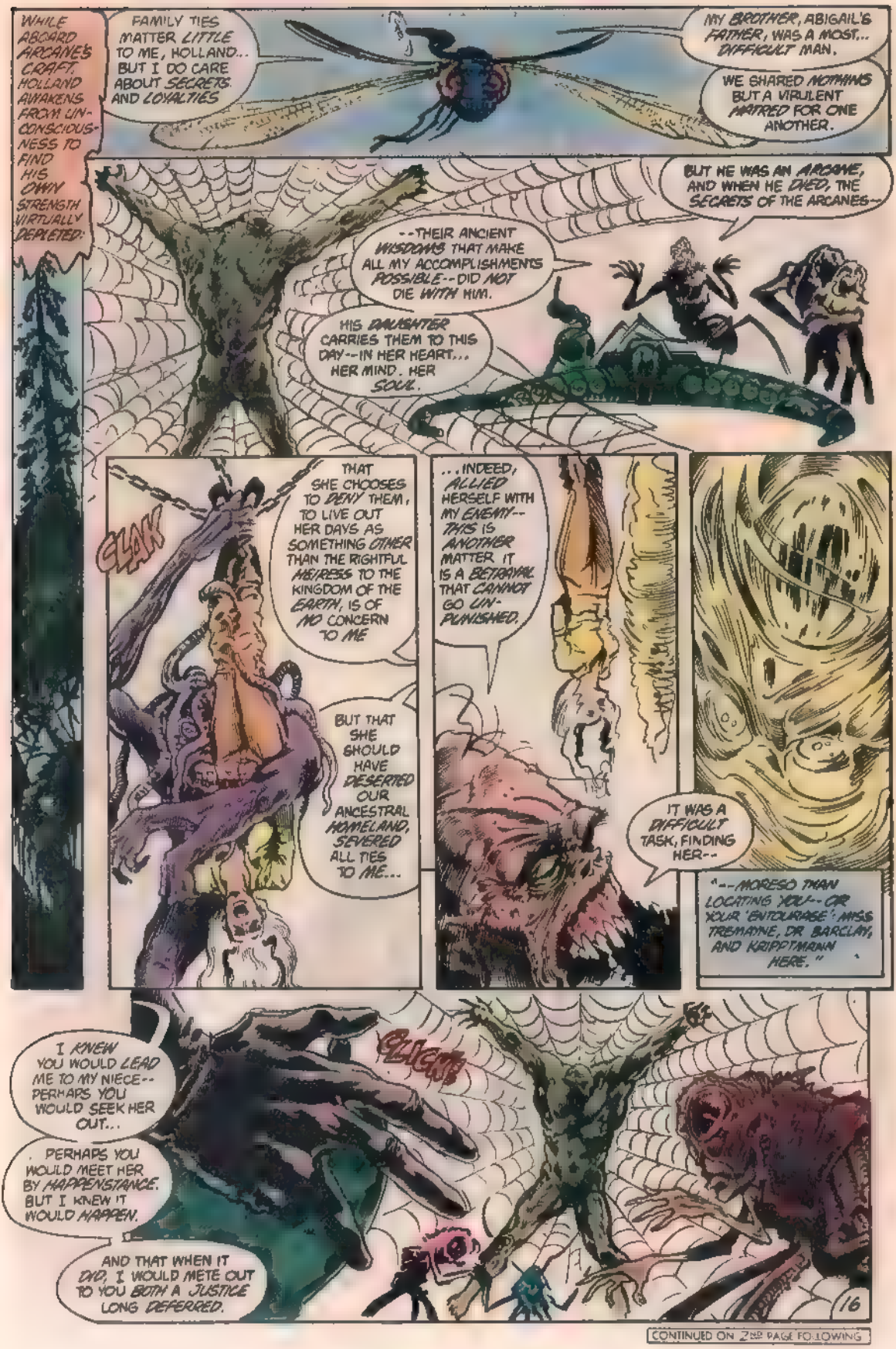

BUT FOR ALEC HOLLAND, NEITHER THIS ASSAULT NOR ARCANE'S RETURN IS AS UNSETTLING AS WHAT HE SEES AS THE SHIP DESCENDS CLOSER:
KRIPPTMAN...?!
HE'S BEEN HYDRAPPED IN SOME SORT OF COCOON?!
...STRUNG UP...LIKE A SIDE OF BEEF...!
MY SUCCESS IN FINDING YOU I OWE TO DR. KRIPPTMANN HERE
YOU DO RECOGNIZE HIM, DO YOU? BUT, THEN AGAIN PERHAPS YOU DON'T.
NO MATTER WHAT... KRIPPTMANN MAY HAVE BEEN GUILTY OF...IN HIS LIFETIME ..HE DOESN'T DESERVE THIS...
...AND I HAVE... NO INTENTION... OF LETTING ARCANE... GET HIS KICKS... OUT OF TORTURING HIM...!
THE SWAMP THING CLAWS AND TEARS AT KRIPPTMANN'S COCOON, ATTEMPTING TO FREE IT FROM THE POLE.
TO DO SO, HE MUST TURN HIS BACK ON MATT AND ABBY--
--WHICH IS PRECISELY WHAT ARCANE HAD IN MIND!
13

HUH..?
ABBY..?!
DAMMIT, I'VE BEEN.., A FOOL..!
KRIPPTMANN.. WAS "ALWAYS OUT" THERE... AS A DECOY..
.. SO THE UN-MEN COULD GRAB ABBY.
...WHILE I WASN'T LOOKING..!
AND I... FELL FOR IT...!
CAN'T HELP IT..!
I'VE GOT TO. ABANDON KRIPPTMANN.. IN ORDER TO FIGHT THESE THINGS..!
HUH..? WHAT WAS THAT ? FELT LIKE.. SOMETHING SMACK..?!
WAIT. THAT HUMANOID WASP..! MUST'VE.. "PASSED" ME WITH ITS STINGER...!
THE VENOM...! SO... POWERFUL...! MY LEGS..!
I. I CAN'T MOVE...
...MY...
PARALYZED, HE LOSES FIRST HIS FOOTING...

ELSEWHERE, ANOTHER LOSS.
A MORAL ONE.
DON'T TALK TO ME ABOUT SELF-RESPECT, DENNIS -- THIS IS ABOUT EGO. YOURS.
YOU HAVE TO PROVE TO YOURSELF THAT YOU'RE STILL THE GREAT HEALER
YOU'RE ALL ALIKE, YOU DOCTORS--YOU'VE ALL GOT A GOD COMPLEX.
WELL, IF YOU CARE ABOUT HUMAN LIFE SO MUCH, DOCTOR...
OF COURSE I CARE ABOUT YOU, LIZ. YOU KNOW HOW I FEEL
I'M COLD, DENNIS. COLD AND AFRAID. STAY WITH ME. PLEASE. I'LL MAKE YOU GLAD YOU DID.
...CARE ABOUT MINE.
I CAN DO SOMETHING FOR YOUR EGO THAT A HUNDRED MIRACLE CURES COULDN'T GIVE YOU.
AW, HELL WHY, LIZ? WHY NOW? YOU KNOW HOW LONG I'VE WANTED THIS... DREAMED ABOUT THIS...
...BUT NOT NOW NOT THIS WAY -- NOT HAVING TO GIVE UP SO MUCH FOR IT.
BUT I WILL
AND YOU KNOW THAT, TOO, DON'T YOU?
ALL RIGHT, THEN, YOU WIN. I CAN'T FIGHT IT, LIZ.


WHILE ABOARD ARCANE'S CRAFT, HOLLAND AWAKENS FROM UNCONSCIOUSNESS TO FIND HIS OWN STRENGTH VIRTUALLY DEPLETED:
FAMILY TIES MATTER LITTLE TO ME, HOLLAND... BUT I DO CARE ABOUT SECRETS AND LOYALTIES
MY BROTHER, ABIGAIL'S FATHER, WAS A MOST... DIFFICULT MAN.
WE SHARED NOTHING BUT A VIRULENT HATRED FOR ONE ANOTHER.
BUT HE WAS AN ARCANE, AND WHEN HE DIED, THE SECRETS OF THE ARCANES--
--THEIR ANCIENT WISDOMS THAT MAKE ALL MY ACCOMPLISHMENTS POSSIBLE--DID NOT DIE WITH HIM.
HIS DAUGHTER CARRIES THEM TO THIS DAY--IN HER HEART... HER MIND. HER SOUL.
CLAK
THAT SHE CHOOSES TO DENY THEM, TO LIVE OUT HER DAYS AS SOMETHING OTHER THAN THE RIGHTFUL HEIRESS TO THE KINGDOM OF THE EARTH, IS OF NO CONCERN TO ME
BUT THAT SHE SHOULD HAVE DESERTED OUR ANCESTRAL HOMELAND, SEVERED ALL TIES TO ME...
...INDEED, ALLIED HERSELF WITH MY ENEMY--THIS IS ANOTHER MATTER. IT IS A BETRAYAL THAT CANNOT GO UNPUNISHED.
IT WAS A DIFFICULT TASK, FINDING HER--
"--MORE SO THAN LOCATING YOU--OR YOUR 'ENTOURAGE': MISS TREMAINE, DR BARCLAY, AND KRIPPTMANN HERE."
I KNEW YOU WOULD LEAD ME TO MY NIECE--PERHAPS YOU WOULD SEEK HER OUT...
. PERHAPS YOU WOULD MEET HER BY HAPPENSTANCE. BUT I KNEW IT WOULD HAPPEN.
AND THAT WHEN IT DID, I WOULD METE OUT TO YOU BOTH A JUSTICE LONG DEFERRED.
CLICK!
16
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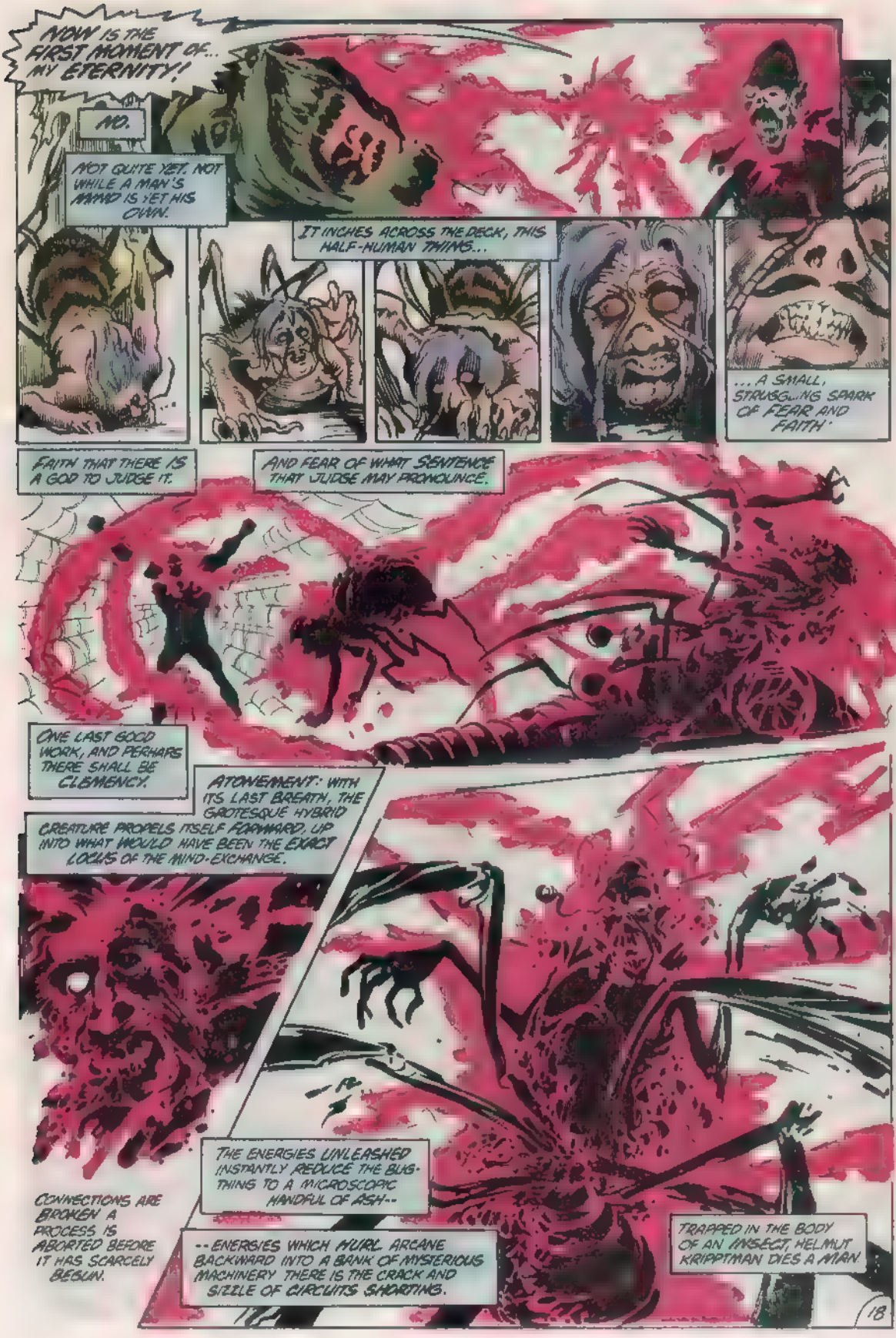
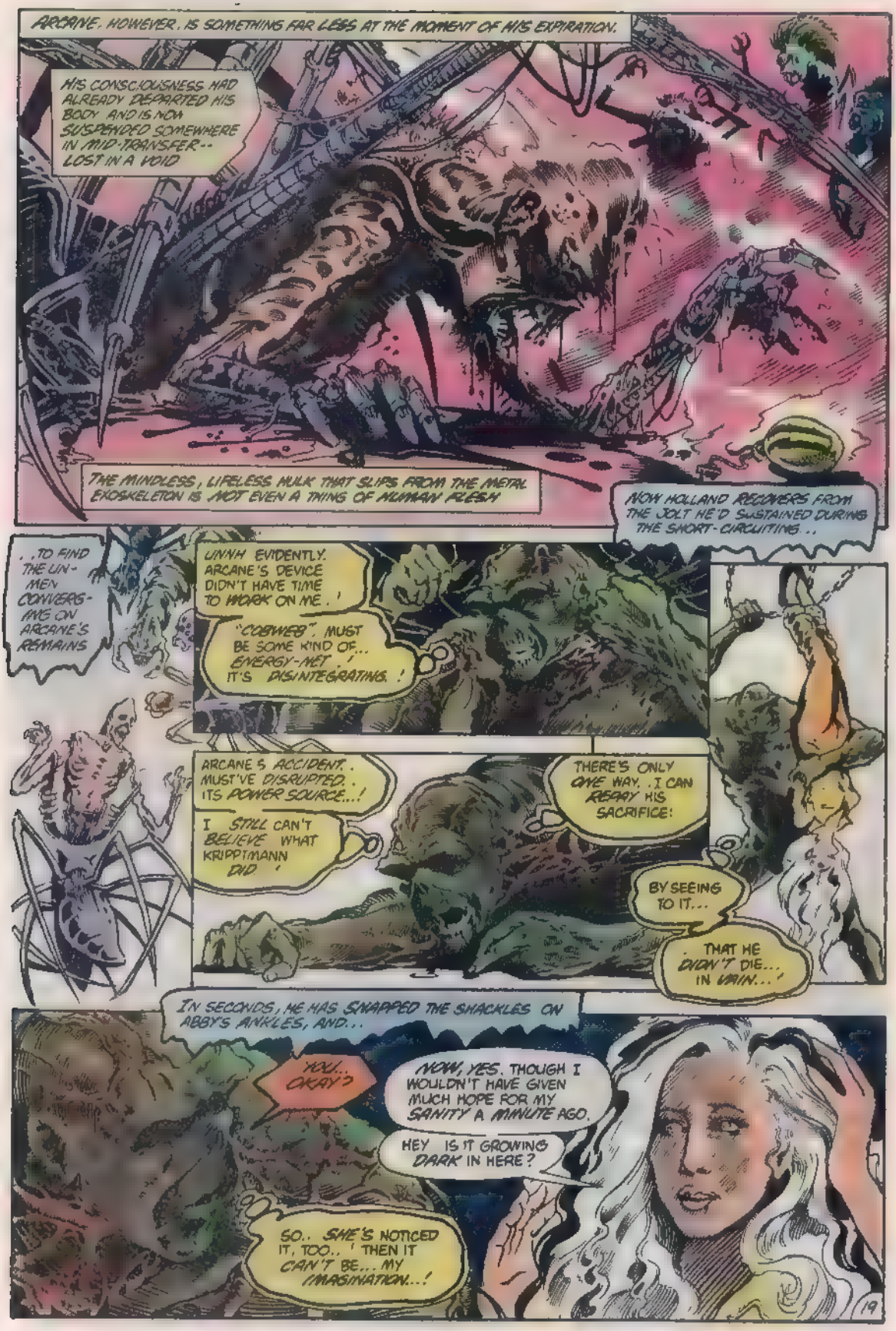
I HAVE ACTIVATED THE DEVICE THAT WILL SOON EFFECT THE MIND-TRANSFERENCE, HOLLAND.
MEANWHILE, ABIGAIL SHALL BE PUT TO DEATH... AS KRIPPTMANN SHALL BE.
WHAT APPEARS TO BE A COCOON WILL DEVOUR ALL THAT MAKES KRIPPTMANN WHAT HE IS.
WHAT IS LEFT SHALL BE A FUSION OF HIS BODY'S STRUCTURE WITH THE CHITINOUS EXOSKELETON OF AN INSECT
THE MIND INSIDE KRIPPTMANN SHALL BE JUST AS PRIMITIVE.
THUS THE KRIPPTMANN YOU KNOW SHALL BE DEAD. AS SHALL MY NIECE -- THOUGH IN A PURELY METAPHORICAL SENSE.
BUT ENOUGH! SOON ENOUGH, YOU SHALL OBSERVE THE FRUIT OF MY LABORS WITH YOUR OWN EYES, HOLLAND.
OR SHOULD I SAY, WITH MINE?
FOR NOW IS THE MOMENT, HOLLAND -- WHAT I HAVE LIVED FOR, THROUGH YEARS BEYOND RECKONING...
... WHAT I HAVE TWICE "DIED" FOR --
SO INTENT IS HOLLAND IN HIS OWN STRUGGLE, HE HAS NOT NOTICED KRIPPTMANN'S.
FOR THE PAST SEVERAL MINUTES, THE ELDERLY SCIENTIST HAS BEEN SLOWLY CHEWING HIS WAY THROUGH THE COCOON.
IN THEIR STEAD SHALL BE TWO MORE MINDLESS UN-MEN -- AS LUSTFULLY, RAVENOUSLY INSTINCTUAL AS AN INSECT.
HOW DELICIOUS THAT SHE WHO WOULD BETRAY ME SHALL INSTEAD BECOME MY SLAVE
NO. NOT... ABBY. NOT IF I CAN HELP IT...!
BUT AS LONG AS THIS STRANGE COBWEB-THING... HOLDS ME IMMOBILE... I DON'T THINK I CAN...!


NOW IS THE FIRST MOMENT OF... MY ETERNITY!
NO.
NOT QUITE YET. NOT WHILE A MAN'S MIND IS YET HIS OWN.
IT INCHES ACROSS THE DECK, THIS HALF-HUMAN THING...
...A SMALL, STRUGGLING SPARK OF FEAR AND FAITH.
FAITH THAT THERE IS A GOD TO JUDGE IT.
AND FEAR OF WHAT SENTENCE THAT JUDGE MAY PRONOUNCE.
ONE LAST GOOD WORK, AND PERHAPS THERE SHALL BE CLEMENCY.
ATONEMENT: WITH ITS LAST BREATH, THE GROTESQUE HYBRID CREATURE PROPELS ITSELF FORWARD, UP INTO WHAT WOULD HAVE BEEN THE EXACT LOCUS OF THE MIND-EXCHANGE.
CONNECTIONS ARE BROKEN A PROCESS IS ABORTED BEFORE IT HAS SCARCELY BEGUN.
THE ENERGIES UNLEASHED INSTANTLY REDUCE THE BUG-THING TO A MICROSCOPIC HANDFUL OF ASH--
--ENERGIES WHICH HURL ARCANE BACKWARD INTO A BANK OF MYSTERIOUS MACHINERY THERE IS THE CRACK AND SIZZLE OF CIRCUITS SHORTING.
TRAPPED IN THE BODY OF AN INSECT, HELMUT KRIPPTMAN DIES A MAN.


ARCANE, HOWEVER, IS SOMETHING FAR LESS AT THE MOMENT OF HIS EXPIRATION.
HIS CONSCIOUSNESS HAD ALREADY DEPARTED HIS BODY AND IS NOW SUSPENDED SOMEWHERE IN MID-TRANSFER-- LOST IN A VOID
THE MINDLESS, LIFELESS HULK THAT SLIPS FROM THE METAL EXOSKELETON IS NOT EVEN A THING OF HUMAN FLESH
NOW HOLLAND RECOVERS FROM THE JOLT HE'D SUSTAINED DURING THE SHORT-CIRCUITING..
..TO FIND THE UN-MEN CONVERGING ON ARCANE'S REMAINS
UNNH EVIDENTLY, ARCANE'S DEVICE DIDN'T HAVE TIME TO WORK ON ME..!
"COBWEB" MUST BE SOME KIND OF... ENERGY-NET..! IT'S DISINTEGRATING..!
ARCANE'S ACCIDENT.. MUST'VE DISRUPTED.. ITS POWER SOURCE...!
I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE WHAT KRIPPTMANN DID!
THERE'S ONLY ONE WAY..I CAN REPAY HIS SACRIFICE!
BY SEEING TO IT...
..THAT HE DIDN'T DIE... IN VAIN...!
IN SECONDS, HE HAS SNAPPED THE SHACKLES ON ABBY'S ANKLES, AND..
YOU.. OKAY?
NOW, YES, THOUGH I WOULDN'T HAVE GIVEN MUCH HOPE FOR MY SANITY A MINUTE AGO.
HEY IS IT GROWING DARK IN HERE?
SO.. SHE'S NOTICED IT, TOO..! THEN IT CAN'T BE... MY IMAGINATION...!
19

THEN SOMETHING.. IS WRONG..WITH THIS SHIP--EH..?
ALEC! LOOK!
I SEE THEM, ABBY..! JUST.. KEEP MOVING
WHAT THEY FIND OF THE OTHER SIDE OF THE WARP ARE SIMPLY.. MORE UN-MEN
THEIR EXPRESSIONS... IF THAT'S WHAT YOU'D CALL THEM... SEEM HOSTILE..!
THAT'S IT... INTO THAT ODD... HOLE IN MID-AIR...!
IT MAY BE JUST THE ESCAPE-HATCH WE NEED...!
OR...IT COULD BE... OUR TUNNEL TO EXTINCTION..! WE'LL KNOW SOON ENOUGH...!
AND THOSE DEAFENING SHRIEKS...!
GUESS..THEY WANT TO.. "PUNISH" ME..FOR WHAT'S HAPPENED TO...THEIR "BOSS"..!
WELL, TOO BAD... THIS TIME THERE ARE NO ELABORATE DISTRACTIONS.. TO PROTECT THEM FROM ME..
.. AND I'VE NEITHER THE TIME NOR THE INCLINATION TO BE GENTLE...!
IT FEELS LIKE THE SHIP'S STABILIZING [illegible] IS FAILING--!
YES..PROBABLY CAUSED BY ARCANE'S COLLISION WITH THAT ANOMALY..!
20

...TO PREVENT A CRASH...
IF I'M RIGHT...
...ABBY AND I... WILL HAVE TO FIND THE CONTROL CENTER... OF THIS SHIP...
AND NO HOBGOBLINS... FROM AN EXTERMINATOR'S NIGHTMARE...
...ARE GOING TO STOP US...!
ON SECOND THOUGHT...
...MAYBE GETTING TO... THE CONTROL-CONSOLE WON'T DO US ANY GOOD..!
NEED TO... THROW... A LITTLE LIGHT ON THE SUBJECT..
...AND THERE'S NO BETTER PLACE TO GET IT FROM... THAN OUTSIDE...!
WE COULD BUY IT... BEFORE I COULD EVEN .. FIGURE OUT HOW TO CORRECT THE PROBLEM...!
PITCH CHUCK IN HERE NOW...! THAT WINDSCREEN UP AHEAD...COULD BE SOME KIND OF WINDOW...!
YAAAAH!

WE ARE GOING DOWN..!
I CAN... FEEL IT...!
OUR ONLY CHANCE NOW... IS TO JUMP..!
THE UN-MEN HAVE RETREATED THERE'S NO ONE TO STOP US NOW... FROM BAILING OUT!
I'M NOT COMPLAINING. BUT I CAN'T HELP... WONDERING WHY NOT..!
... SEE THE INSECTOID CREATURES RACING TO A CERTAIN CHAMBER...
...AS IF IN ANSWER TO AN UNHEARD SUMMONS--A SOUNDLESS DINNER GONG.
IN THAT CHAMBER, LIKE MANY SPECIES OF INSECTS, THE UN-MEN ARE DISPOSING OF THEIR LEADER, NOW THAT THEY HAVE NO FURTHER USE FOR HIM.

AND SO THEY REMAIN OBLIVIOUS AS THEIR ERST-WHILE CAPTIVES ESCAPE..
--PLUNGING INTO A SWAMP JUST BEFORE IMPACT.
AND AS THE DAWN SKY LIGHTENS FURTHER WITH THE MASSIVE EXPLOSION OF ARCANE'S SHIP...
SO MUCH FOR ARCANE! ...BUT.. HAVE I REALLY SEEN THE LAST OF HIM...?
COME ON, ALEC-- LET'S GO.
I MUST KNOW IF MATT'S ALL RIGHT--!
YES.. OF COURSE YOU MUST. ' AND AFTER WE CHECK ON HIM, I'D BETTER FIND DENNIS AND LIZ. !
POOR MATT HE'S BEEN THROUGH SO MUCH..! I HATE TO ASK HIM TO COME WITH ME, TO WASHINGTON..
. TO CONFRONT SUNDERLAND AND D.D.I... BUT I'VE GOT TO..'
NOW THAT ARKADY-MANN IS DEAD.. THERE'S NO ONE ELSE ON "MY SIDE"...
.. WHO KNOWS THEM THE WAY MATT DOES...! IT'LL BE VERY RISKY, THOUGH...
...ESPECIALLY WITH THAT UNCONTROLLABLE POWER OF HIS.. OR WHATEVER IT IS...! AND IF... SOMEHOW..
..ARCANE HAS SURVIVED.. THE WAY HE ALWAYS SEEMS TO HAVE DONE... BEFORE...
ABBY...! GO ON AHEAD...! SOMETHING'S, I HAVE TO DO....!
ALL RIGHT, ALEC-- I'LL SEE YOU BACK AT THE CABIN.
BEFORE I DO ANYTHING ELSE... I'VE GOT TO KNOW.. IF WE'LL REALLY BE SAFE FROM ARCANE THIS TIME...!
I'VE GOT TO BE SURE... HE'S FINALLY DEAD...!
I'VE GOT TO... SEE THE BODY...
LOOSE ENDS

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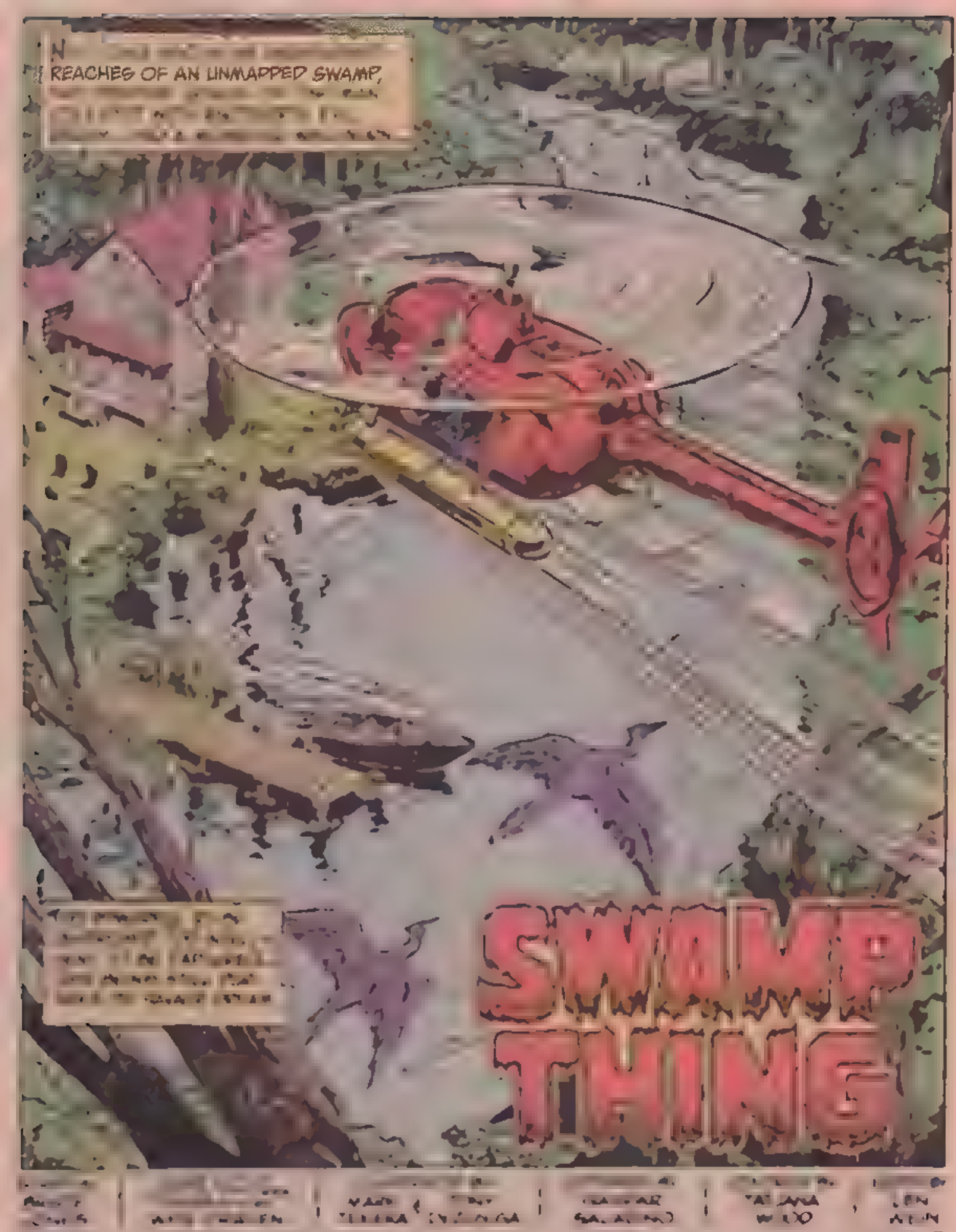
SWAMP THING



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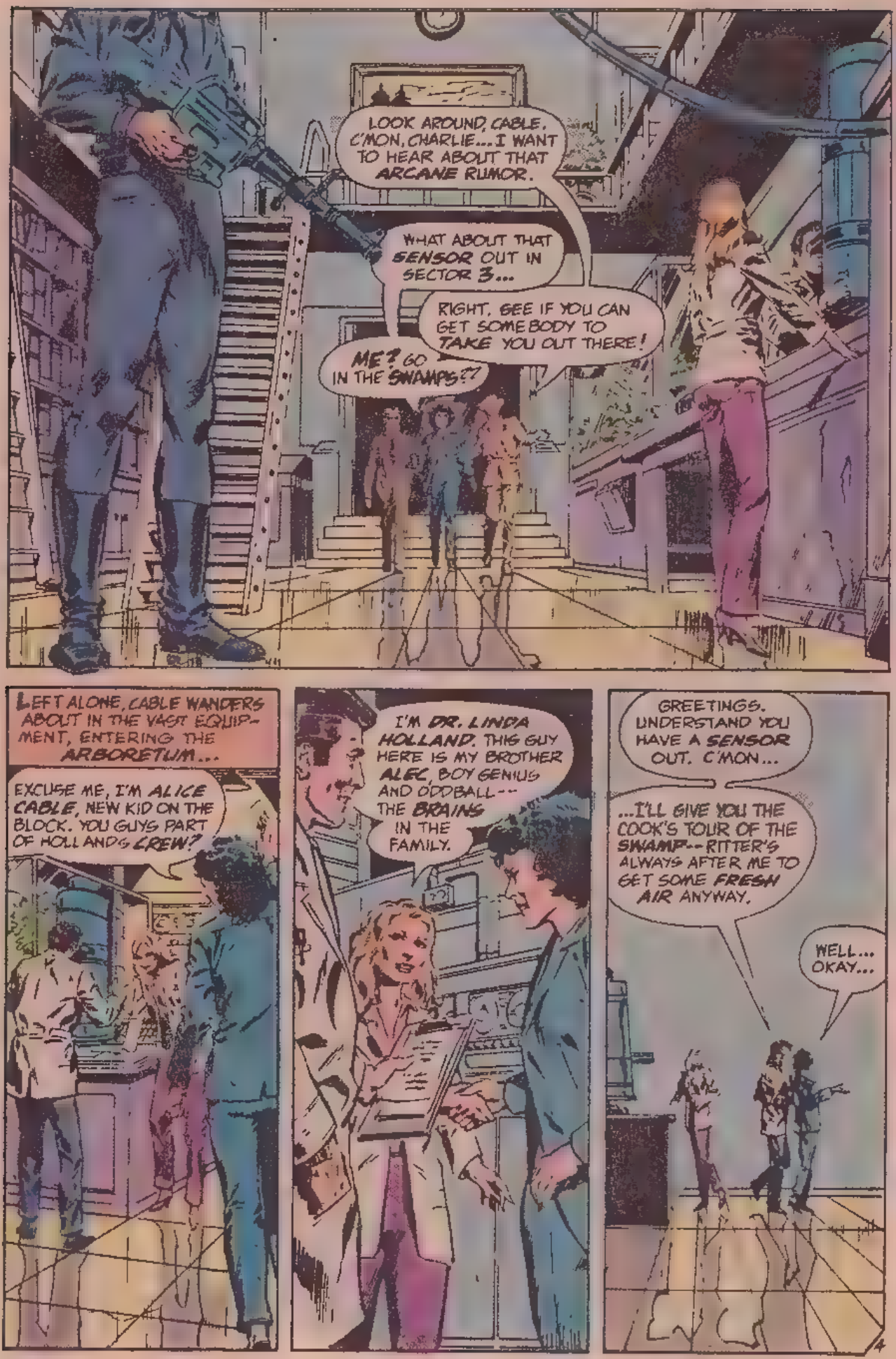
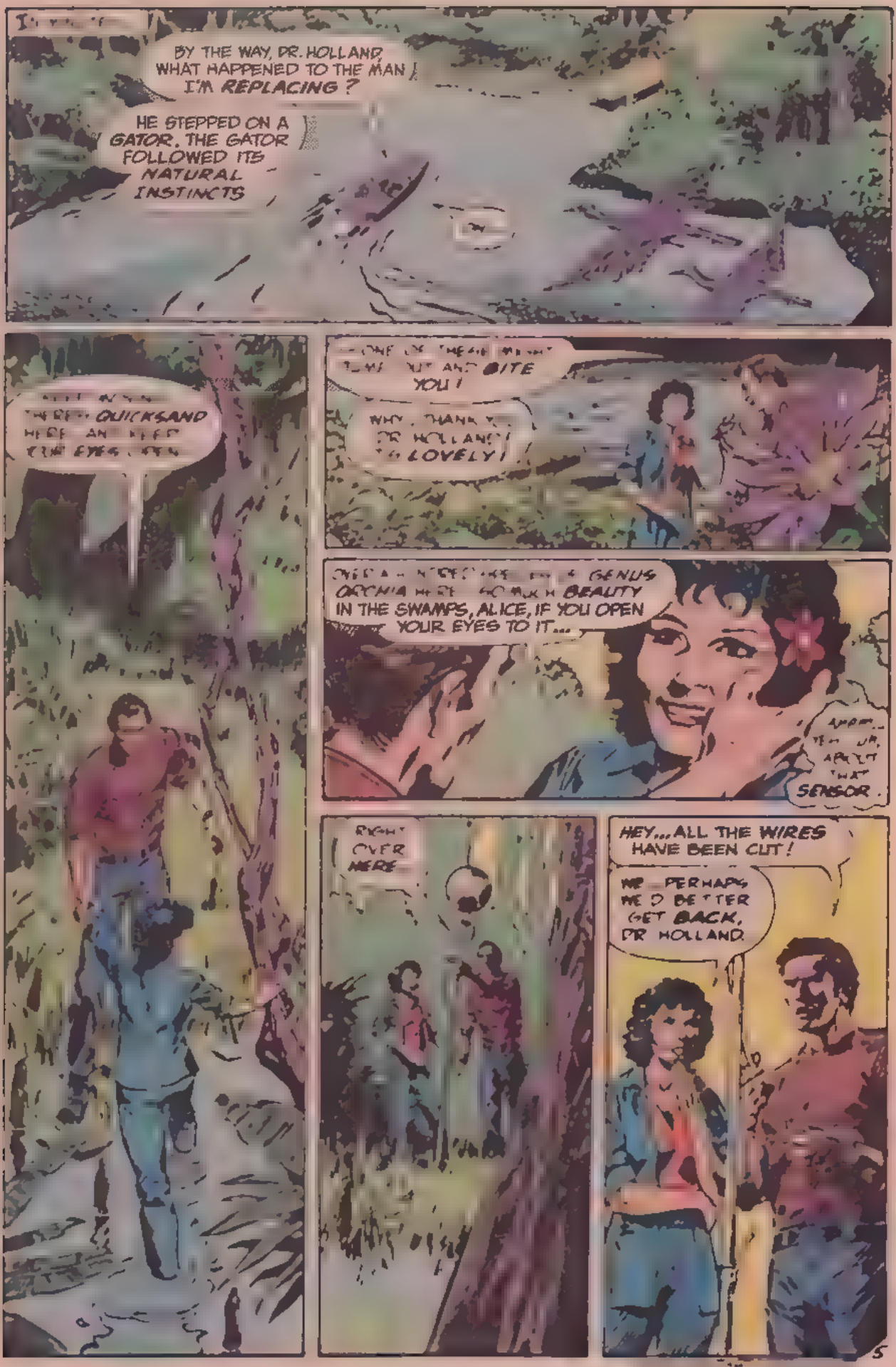
WHAT DOES HOLLAND THINK ABOUT GETTING YANKED FROM THE SWAMPS BACK TO WASHINGTON, CHARLIE?
I DOUBT IF RITTER'S TOLD HIM, MISS CABLE. HE COULDN'T EVEN BELIEVE ME WHEN I RADIOED HIM THE NEWS THIS MORNING!
COMMAND SHED
CHURCH?
LATER.
HUSH-HUSH
PLANTS!
WHAT'S HOLLAND WORKING ON HERE ANYWAY?
PHONE
SENSOR
PRONTO!

5
COME ON--GET THAT THING OUT OF SIGHT! YOU WANT TO GET PICKED UP ON A SPY SATELLITE?
HARRY RITTER, PROJECT FIELD
I WANT TO RUN A CHECK ON ALL THE SENSORS RIGHT AWAY! AT LEAST ONE IS READING MALFUNCTION
NO SURPRISE THEY'RE NOT IN A WEEK
WASHINGTON.
A RUMOR I'VE JUST HEARD! ARCANE'S GOT WIND OF THE PROJECT
WHA--I THOUGHT ARCANE WAS DEAD
HOLLAND
GET ME!
WITH A SQUEAK OF RUSTED HINGES, THE DOUBLE DOORS OF THE RUINED CHURCH SWING OPEN...CABLE FINDS HERSELF IN A SPACE BETWEEN THE CRUMBLING OUTER SURFACE AND AN INNER, GLEAMING SHELL
I KEEP THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE NEAR HOLLAND TO A MINIMUM. THIS SENSOR ADMITS ONLY THE THREE OF US AND THE HOLLANDS..
3

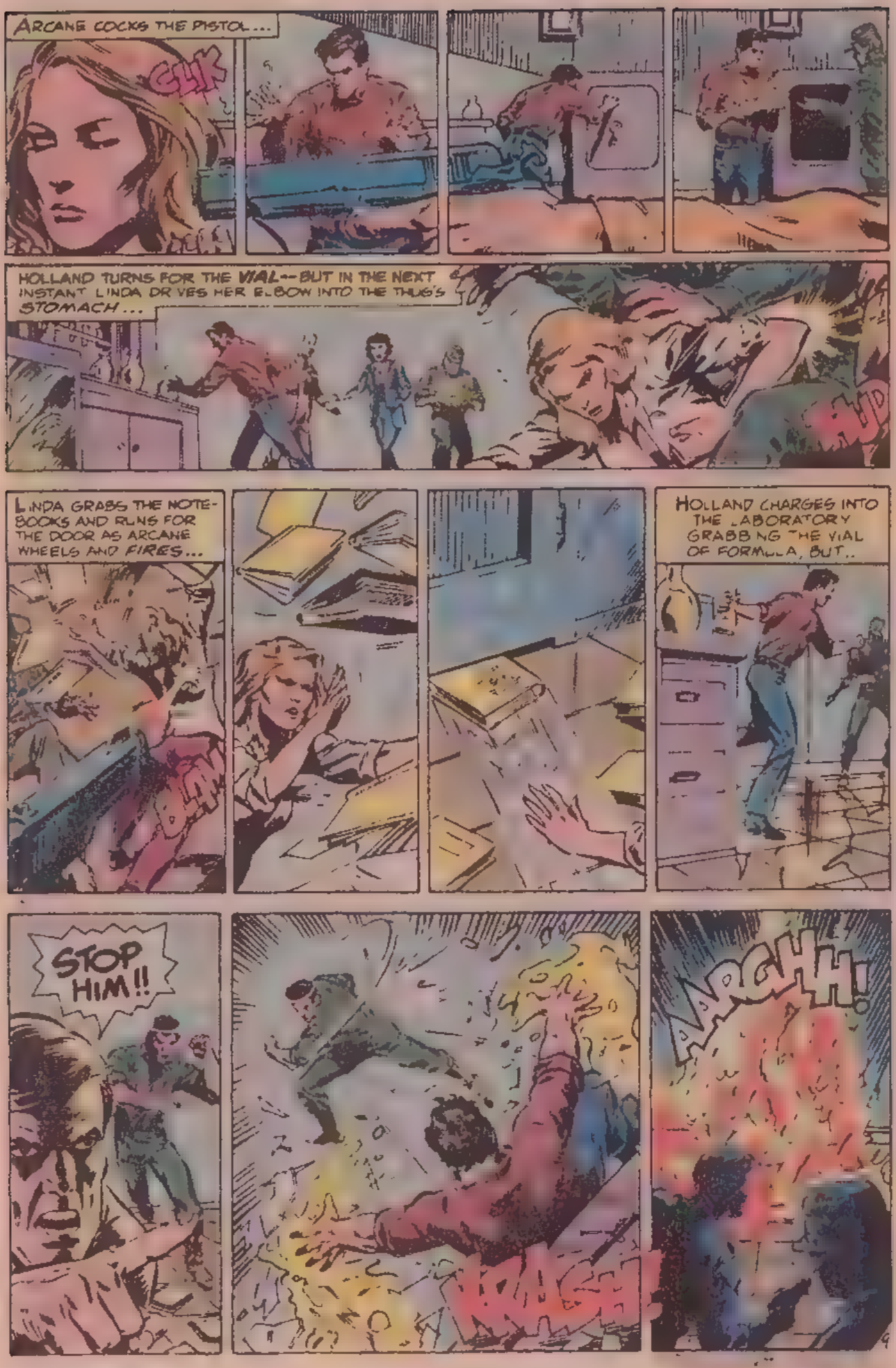

LOOK AROUND, CABLE. C'MON, CHARLIE... I WANT TO HEAR ABOUT THAT ARCANE RUMOR.
WHAT ABOUT THAT SENSOR OUT IN SECTOR 3...
RIGHT. SEE IF YOU CAN GET SOMEBODY TO TAKE YOU OUT THERE!
ME? GO IN THE SWAMPS!?
LEFT ALONE, CABLE WANDERS ABOUT IN THE VAST EQUIPMENT, ENTERING THE ARBORETUM...
EXCUSE ME, I'M ALICE CABLE, NEW KID ON THE BLOCK. YOU GUYS PART OF HOLLAND'S CREW?
I'M DR. LINDA HOLLAND. THIS GUY HERE IS MY BROTHER ALEC, BOY GENIUS AND ODDBALL-- THE BRAINS IN THE FAMILY.
GREETINGS. UNDERSTAND YOU HAVE A SENSOR OUT. C'MON...
...I'LL GIVE YOU THE COOK'S TOUR OF THE SWAMP-- RITTER'S ALWAYS AFTER ME TO GET SOME FRESH AIR ANYWAY.
WELL... OKAY...


BY THE WAY, DR. HOLLAND WHAT HAPPENED TO THE MAN I'M REPLACING?
HE STEPPED ON A GATOR. THE GATOR FOLLOWED ITS NATURAL INSTINCTS
QUICKSAND
BITE YOU!
LOVELY!
GENUS
BEAUTY IN THE SWAMPS, ALICE, IF YOU OPEN YOUR EYES TO IT...
SENSOR
RIGHT OVER HERE
HEY... ALL THE WIRES HAVE BEEN CUT!
PERHAPS WE'D BETTER GET BACK, DR HOLLAND
5

BACK AT THE PLANT
THERE'S A CUT SENSOR OUT THERE, RITTER!
WHAT!!
HANK WAS WORKING ON THAT ONE WHEN THE GATOR GOT HIM!
YOU DIDN'T SEE ANOTHER AGENT OUT THERE, DID YOU?
FELLA NAMED RON. WE'VE LOST COMMUNICATION
SHOT?
OKAY?
DAMNEDEST THING...THAT NEW BATCH I COOKED UP--
WATCH!
NITRO!
STRANGE! WE JUST DEVELOPED THIS STUFF LAST WEEK! WE HAVEN'T EVEN TESTED IT BEYOND MICROSCOPIC
ARE
THIS?
OF THE EARTH! A BASIC VEGE-TABLE
UNMISTAKEABLE ANIMAL NUCLEUS!

I WOULDN'T MIND TOMATOES THAT GROW IN A DESERT OR SAHARA OR EVEN IN THE GOOD OLD U.S.A., SAY IN 2001 WHEN THERE'LL BE SIX AND A HALF BILLION PEOPLE ON THIS PLANET, MOST HUNGRY!
IF IT WOULD ALTER PLANTS SO MUCH WHAT MIGHT IT DO TO PEOPLE?
I WASN'T PLANNING TO BOTTLE IT AS A NEW SOFT DRINK...
MAYBE NOT YOU, BUT WHAT IF IT FELL INTO THE WRONG HANDS?
LOOK! THE NEW FORMULA IS REPLICATING LIKE MAD!
I JUST PUT A MICROBE FROM A SECTION OF RAT FUR IN FOR THE HECK OF IT... LET'S TRY IT ON SOMETHING...
HERE YOUR FLOWER...
HOW LONG BEFORE WE KNOW ANYTHING?
LONG TIME, A WEEK PERHAPS I'D...
WHAT TH--
ALEC! LOOK AT IT!
I DON'T BELIEVE THIS!
RITTER! HE'S GOT TO BE TOLD RIGHT AWAY!
GET HIM!

BUT SECONDS AFTER CABLE LEAVES THE COMPOUND...
EEEE
ALICE!
AN INTERESTING SPECIMEN YOU HAVE THERE, DR. HOLLAND. I DON'T THINK I'VE EVER SEEN ANYTHING LIKE IT...
THE NAME IS FERRET. I REPRESENT A PRIVATE PARTY THAT WANTS THE FORMULA, WHO WILL GIVE AN ARM AND LEG TO OWN IT.
YOUR ARM AND LEG, IF NECESSARY...
THERE IS A MOVEMENT BEHIND THEM. HOLLAND LOOKS UP TO SEE...
RITTER!
WHAT'S THE HOLDUP, FERRET?
HE'S BEING DIFFICULT!
RITTER...YOU'RE NOT PART OF THIS...
THEN, "RITTER" PERFORMS A TOTALLY UNEXPECTED...
NO, DR. HOLLAND. NOT RITTER.. RITTER, POOR FELLOW, IS LONG DEAD...
...FEAT OF BLACK MAGIC...
YOUR MISTAKE, DEAR FERRET, WAS IN THREATENING THIS MAN.
YOU SHOULD, INSTEAD, THREATEN THOSE HE LOVES...
ALL MATERIALS PERTAINING TO THIS SUBSTANCE--NOW! OR SHE DIES! WHAT SORT OF REJUVENATION WILL YOU BE ABLE TO PERFORM ON HER THEN?
ALEC DON'T!


ARCANE COCKS THE PISTOL...
GHK
HOLLAND TURNS FOR THE VIAL--BUT IN THE NEXT INSTANT LINDA DRIVES HER ELBOW INTO THE THUG'S STOMACH...
LINDA GRABS THE NOTE-BOOKS AND RUNS FOR THE DOOR AS ARCANE WHEELS AND FIRES...
HOLLAND CHARGES INTO THE LABORATORY GRABBING THE VIAL OF FORMULA, BUT..
STOP HIM!!
ARGHHH!

AS HOLLAND'S FLAMING, SHRIEKING BODY FLASHES
E LAB...
THE BURN

SWAMP THING
PART II
A
FERRET DRAGS ON HIS CIGARETTE, WATCHING LIKE A HAWK IN A TREETOP
H
IS THROWN INTO THE DEEP SWAMP
15

THE NOTEBOOK! GOT TO HIDE IT!
AWAY FROM THE HIDDEN NOTE-BOOK
NO!
LET ME GO-- MPHH!
HEH-HEH!
JOINED BY SEVERAL OTHER LAUGHING MEN, FERRET FORCES THE GIRL INTO HOLLAND'S MOTOR BOAT AND SHOVES OFF...
FROM THE SHORE, HIS FACE STRANGELY TWISTED WITH UNWELCOME SYMPATHY FOR CABLE'S FLIGHT.

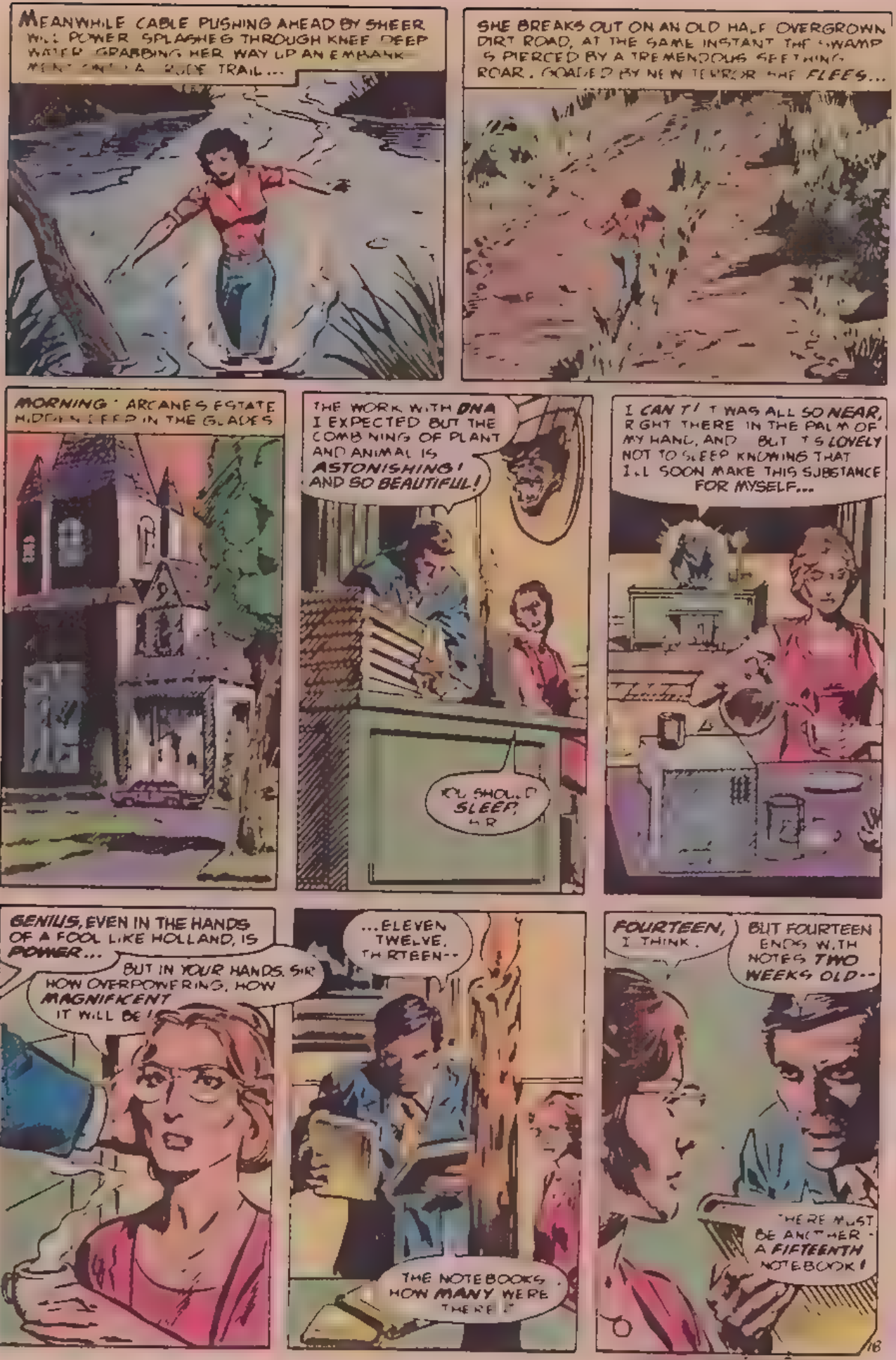
THE ROCKING BOAT LURCHES FARTHER OUT INTO THE BLACK POOL
NO!
CABLE COMES UP CHOKING AND SCREAMING ONLY TO BE SHOVED BACK UNDER AGAIN
GAME..
LONGER

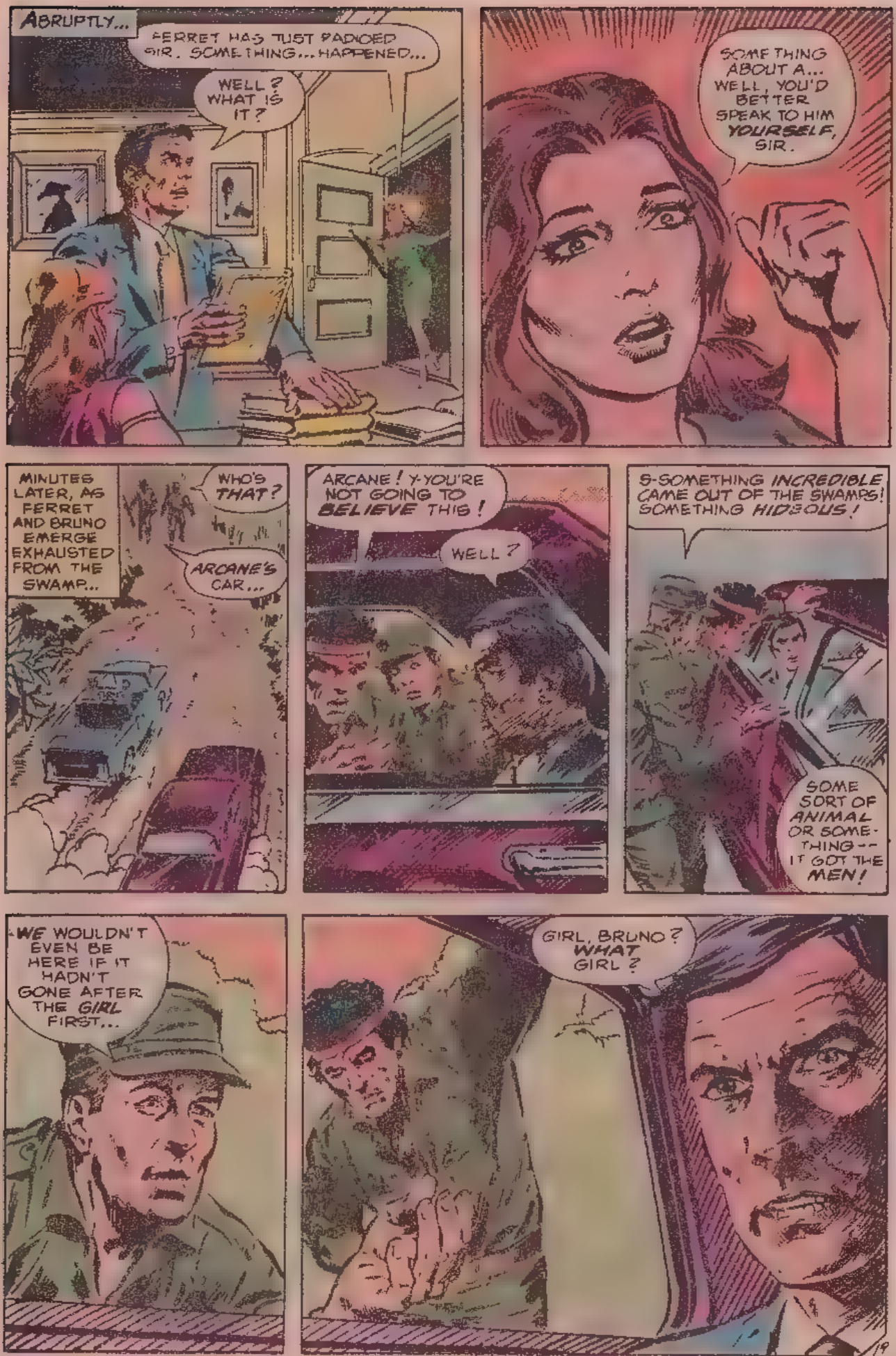
YAAGGHHHHH!
AND A MOMENT LATER, A DIM SHAPE CAN BE SEEN SURGING THROUGH THE DEEP MIST, LUMBERING OUT ON THE FAR SHORE, CARRYING THE LIMP BODY OF ALICE CABLE...
MOMENTS LATER, AS AN EXHAUSTED FERRET STRUGGLES TO SHORE...

WHILE DEEP IN THE BAYOUS...
SEMI-CONSCIOUSNESS RETURNS; CABLE'S EYES FLICKER IN DELIRIUM AS SHE RELIVES THE DROWNING...
...UNAWARE OF THE BEAST'S PRESENCE.
SUDDEN DISTANT GUNFIRE WHIRLS THE MONSTER ABOUT. THE HUGE HEAD SWINGS UP, ITS VERDANT EARS COCKED TO THE NOISE. A LOW HISSING SOUND OF UTTER RAGE RUMBLES OUT OF ITS ENORMOUS CHEST...
A MOMENT LATER THE THING IS GONE. CABLE, DAZED AND HELPLESS, STRUGGLES TO SIT UP...
WELL... WHAT HAVE WE GOT HERE?
SO LONG, BABY...

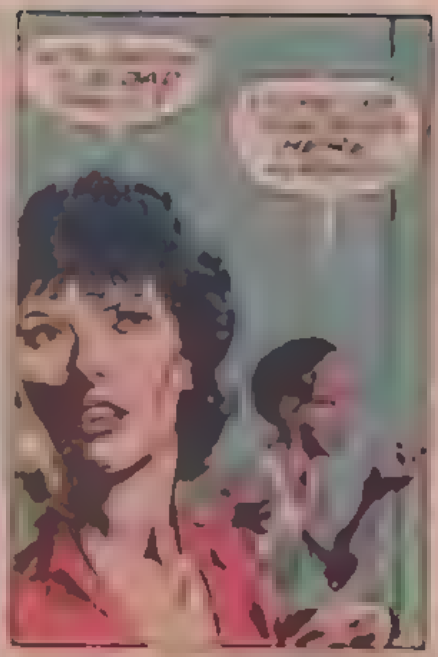
BUT AN INSTANT BEFORE THE TRIGGER CAN BE SQUEEZED...
--ULP!
YAGGHHHH!
WHILE A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY...
WHAT IS THAT THING?
WHAT'S UP BRUNO! LISTEN!
SOMETHING'S COMIN WILLIE??
THAT AIN'T WILLIE...
IT'S HEADIN THAT WAY. C'MON!
WHAZZAT?
SNAP
THE THIRD MAN, NERVOUS AS A CAT ALREADY, TURNS AND FIRES AT THE FIRST SOUND HE HEARS...
BAM

CEASE FIRING! YOU--
IT'S DONOVAN! YOU SHOT HIM!
NEVER MIND THAT, BRUNO! SPREAD OUT--
--AND KEEP YOUR HEADS!
HOLD IT! WHAT'S THAT NOISE...?
MAYBE--
SUDDENLY, OUT OF THE ALMOST MADDENING SILENCE...
LEEAAAGGH
MAYBE WE SHOULD--
-- GET THE HELL OUT OF HERE!

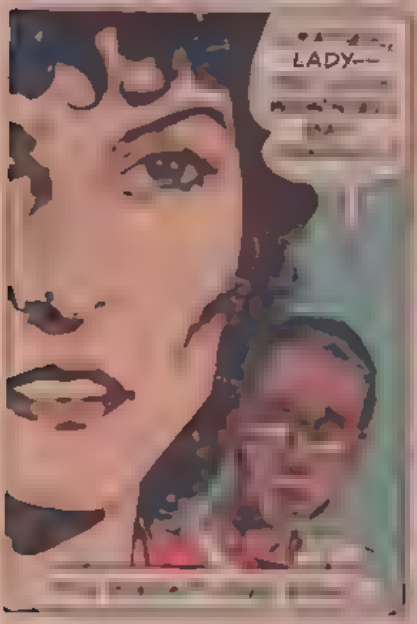

MEANWHILE CABLE PUSHING AHEAD BY SHEER WILL POWER SPLASHES THROUGH KNEE DEEP WATER GRABBING HER WAY UP AN EMBANK-MENT ONTO A RUDE TRAIL...
SHE BREAKS OUT ON AN OLD HALF OVERGROWN DIRT ROAD, AT THE SAME INSTANT THE SWAMP IS PIERCED BY A TREMENDOUS SEETHING ROAR. GOADED BY NEW TERROR SHE FLEES...
MORNING. ARCANES ESTATE HIDDEN DEEP IN THE GLADES
THE WORK WITH DNA I EXPECTED BUT THE COMBINING OF PLANT AND ANIMAL IS ASTONISHING! AND SO BEAUTIFUL!
YOU SHOULD SLEEP, SIR
I CAN'T! IT WAS ALL SO NEAR, RIGHT THERE IN THE PALM OF MY HAND, AND BUT IT IS LOVELY NOT TO SLEEP KNOWING THAT I'LL SOON MAKE THIS SUBSTANCE FOR MYSELF...
GENIUS, EVEN IN THE HANDS OF A FOOL LIKE HOLLAND, IS POWER...
BUT IN YOUR HANDS, SIR HOW OVERPOWERING, HOW MAGNIFICENT IT WILL BE!
...ELEVEN TWELVE, THIRTEEN--
THE NOTEBOOKS. HOW MANY WERE THERE?
FOURTEEN, I THINK.
BUT FOURTEEN ENDS WITH NOTES TWO WEEKS OLD--
THERE MUST BE ANOTHER - A FIFTEENTH NOTEBOOK!
18


ABRUPTLY...
FERRET HAS JUST PADDED SIR. SOMETHING... HAPPENED...
WELL? WHAT IS IT?
SOMETHING ABOUT A... WELL, YOU'D BETTER SPEAK TO HIM YOURSELF, SIR.
MINUTES LATER, AS FERRET AND BRUNO EMERGE EXHAUSTED FROM THE SWAMP...
WHO'S THAT?
ARCANE'S CAR...
ARCANE! Y-YOU'RE NOT GOING TO BELIEVE THIS!
WELL?
S-SOMETHING INCREDIBLE CAME OUT OF THE SWAMPS! SOMETHING HIDEOUS!
SOME SORT OF ANIMAL OR SOMETHING -- IT GOT THE MEN!
WE WOULDN'T EVEN BE HERE IF IT HADN'T GONE AFTER THE GIRL FIRST...
GIRL, BRUNO? WHAT GIRL?
19

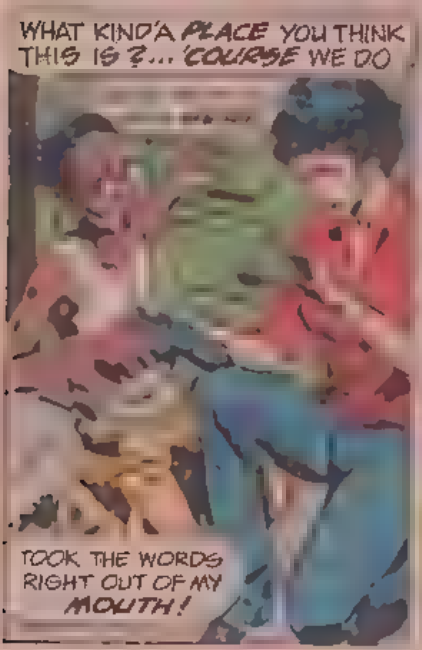
AN OLD GAS STATION, SIX MILES SOUTH...
GAS
Uh-huh. HERE COMES TROUBLE.
GOT A PHONE THAT WORKS?
OPEN
INSIDE.
THIS IS 5/7 -- OPERATION MOUNT SAINT HELENS
GIVE ME MY NEXT SUPERIOR, PLEASE. AND HURRY!
CABLE'S CALL GOES THROUGH BUT NOT WHERE SHE THINKS IT DOES...
YES...WHAT HAPPENED? WHAT?
INTERCEPTING THE MESSAGE, ARCANE DISGUISES HIS VOICE AS THAT OF RITTER'S...
HOLD ON WE'LL GET TO YOU -- YOU CAN EXPLAIN LATER
CABLE...DID YOU MANAGE TO SAVE ANYTHING AFTER THE LAB BURNED?
DAMN -- I'VE GOT THE LAST NOTEBOOK!
VERY GOOD! I'LL BE THERE BEFORE YOU KNOW IT...

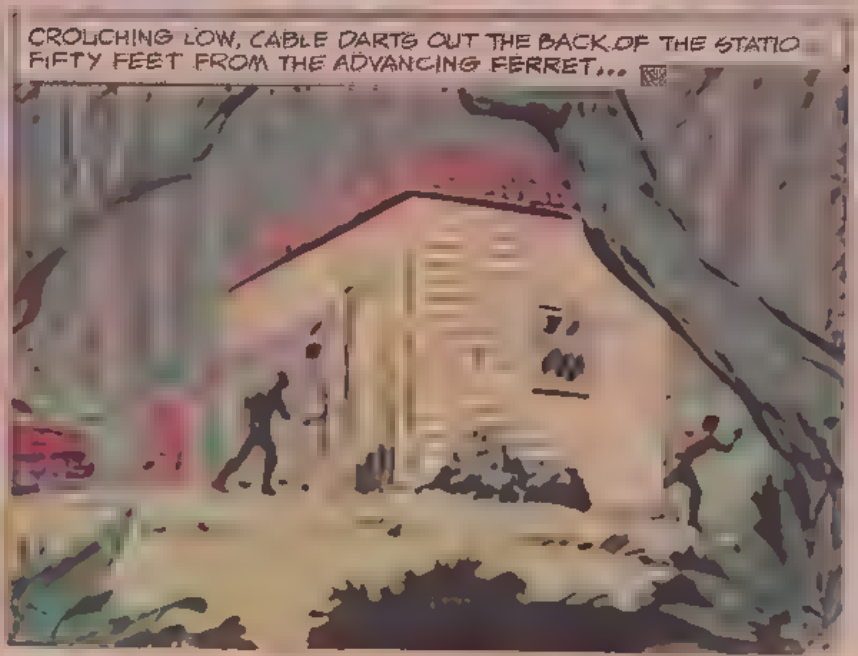


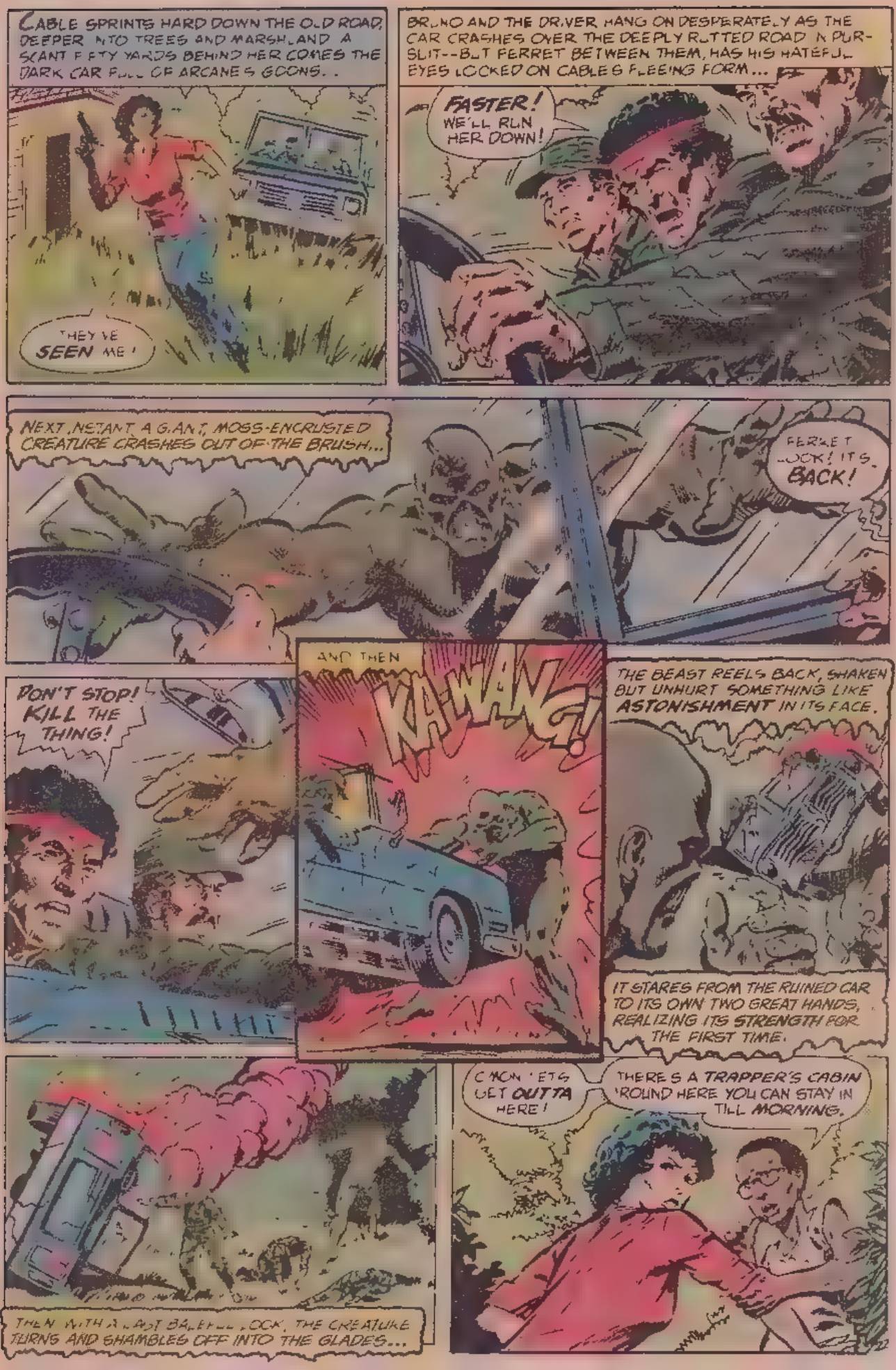
FAST


LADY—

I'M AFRAID


WHAT KIND'A PLACE YOU THINK THIS IS?... 'COURSE WE DO
TOOK THE WORDS RIGHT OUT OF MY MOUTH!


CROUCHING LOW, CABLE DARTS OUT THE BACK OF THE STATIO
FIFTY FEET FROM THE ADVANCING FERRET...


CABLE SPRINTS HARD DOWN THE OLD ROAD, DEEPER INTO TREES AND MARSHLAND A SCANT FIFTY YARDS BEHIND HER COMES THE DARK CAR FULL OF ARCANE'S GOONS. .
THEY'VE SEEN ME!
BRUNO AND THE DRIVER HANG ON DESPERATELY AS THE CAR CRASHES OVER THE DEEPLY RUTTED ROAD IN PURSUIT--BUT FERRET BETWEEN THEM, HAS HIS HATEFUL EYES LOCKED ON CABLE'S FLEEING FORM...
FASTER! WE'LL RUN HER DOWN!
NEXT, INSTANT A GIANT, MOSS-ENCRUSTED CREATURE CRASHES OUT OF THE BRUSH...
FERRET LOOK! IT'S BACK!
DON'T STOP! KILL THE THING!
AND THEN
KA-WANG!
THE BEAST REELS BACK, SHAKEN BUT UNHURT SOMETHING LIKE ASTONISHMENT IN ITS FACE.
IT STARES FROM THE RUINED CAR TO ITS OWN TWO GREAT HANDS, REALIZING ITS STRENGTH FOR THE FIRST TIME.
THEN WITH A LAST BALEFUL LOOK, THE CREATURE TURNS AND SHAMBLES OFF INTO THE GLADES...
C'MON! LET'S GET OUTTA HERE!
THERE'S A TRAPPER'S CABIN 'ROUND HERE YOU CAN STAY IN TILL MORNING.

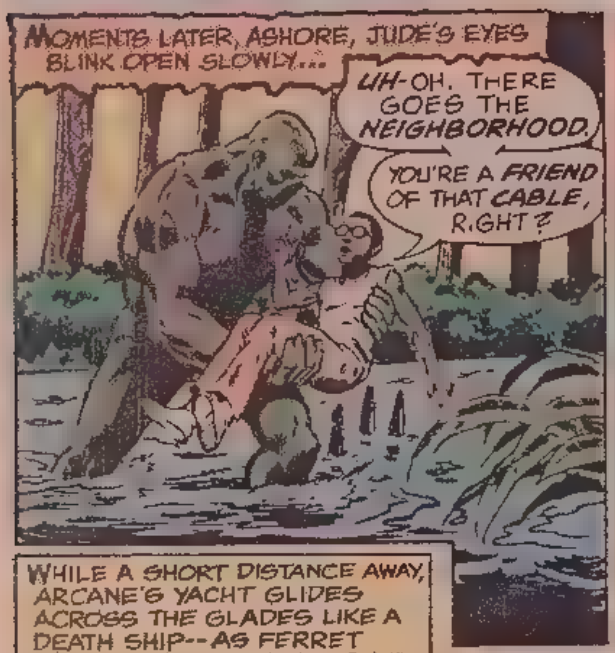
NIGHT
TREE!
STOP
WORTH
WANT
THING... AND I WANT THE NOTEBOOK
VOLUMES
ELEMENTS OF THE FORMULA THAT DETERMINES HIM.
YOU'VE
GIRL
BEAST RIGHT?
FIND THE
FOLLOW..
MORNING, AT THE SIGHT OF THE COMPOUND...
RELIEF
GET
WASHINGTON

WHILE...
IT WAS YOUR FAULT WE LOST HER-- YOU AND YOUR TALKING...
FERRET! THERE SHE IS!
GOVERNMENT MEN-- I TOLD YOU THIS PLACE WAS POSTED!
THOSE AREN'T GOVERNMENT MEN, JUDE!
WORSE THAN THE GOV'MENT? WE GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE THEN!
BUT AS FERRET'S AIR BOAT CLOSES IN...
YAGGHHH!!
LOOK OUT! YOU'LL WRECK US!
KILL IT! KILL THAT THING!
24
CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

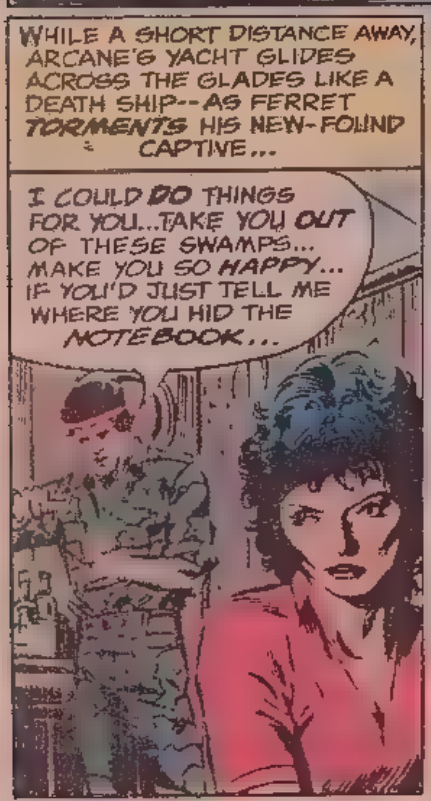
A SECOND POWERFUL AIR
MONSTER...
BRATATAT!
RAAGH!
...AS FERRET'S AIR BOAT BEARS DOWN FROM BEHIND
WHEELING, COMING BACK FOR THE KILL, FERRET'S BOAT HAULS IN AND SLEWS TO A STOP. THE MEN
A RABBIT...
THEN, ABRUPTLY, THE LAUGHTER DIES. THE BEAST HAS VANISHED ONCE MORE.
DAMN THINGS SLIPPERY. WHERE THE HELL...
WITHOUT WARNING FERRET'S BOAT SIMPLY FLIPS...
YAAGH!
A FEW SECONDS LATER THIRTY FEET AWAY THE MONSTER BREECHES
POW! POW!
GET THAT FROG FACED CREEP!

I-I'VE GOT TO LEAVE YOU JUDE I'VE GOT TO GO BACK AND TRY TO HELP
WHO?
I'M NOT SURE BUT I GOT A GO! AND I'VE GOT TA GET THIS NOTE BOOK BACK TO SAFETY!
HIDE IT--I'LL COME BACK FOR IT OR I SAY, NOW!
SOON...
WRECKED AIR BOATS...LOOKS LIKE WORLD WAR II HERE..
WHAT'S THIS? A CABIN CRUISER...! OUT HERE..?
SUDDENLY BEHIND HER
JUDE? HEY, I THOUGHT I TOLD YOU TO STAY BA--
JUDE!!
NO! MPH!!

MOMENTS LATER, DOWNSTREAM...


MOMENTS LATER, ASHORE, JUDE'S EYES BLINK OPEN SLOWLY...
UH-OH. THERE GOES THE NEIGHBORHOOD.
YOU'RE A FRIEND OF THAT CABLE, RIGHT?

THEN I GOT SOMETHING FOR YOU... SHE SAID I SHOULD PUT IT SOMEPLACE SAFE...


WHILE A SHORT DISTANCE AWAY, ARCANE'S YACHT GLIDES ACROSS THE GLADES LIKE A DEATH SHIP--AS FERRET TORMENTS HIS NEW-FOUND CAPTIVE...
I COULD DO THINGS FOR YOU...TAKE YOU OUT OF THESE SWAMPS... MAKE YOU SO HAPPY... IF YOU'D JUST TELL ME WHERE YOU HID THE NOTEBOOK...

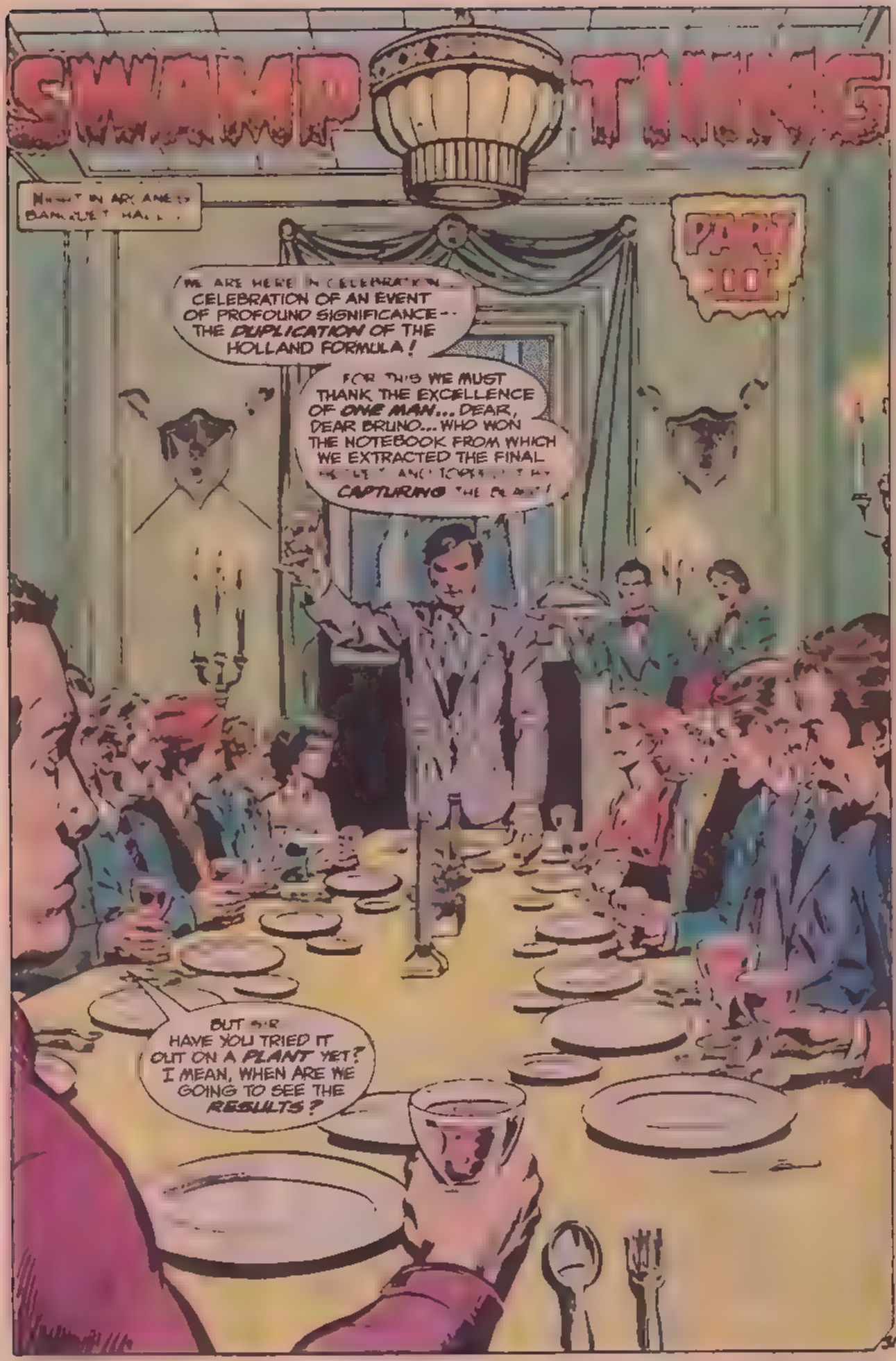
I LIKE THE SWAMPS FINE. IT'S THE SLIME THAT CRAWLS OUT FROM UNDER THE ROCKS THAT TURNS MY STOMACH.

NASTY MOUTH... BUT A PRETTY ONE...

BUT IN THE NEXT INSTANT CABLE'S SEEMINGLY PASSIVE DEMEANOR ERUPTS INTO VIOLENT ACTION.
WAK!
AND BEFORE THE ENRAGED FERRET CAN RECOVER...
SOME DISTANCE AWAY CABLE CLAWS HER WAY OUT OF DEEP MUCK SHA...WS ONTO A TANGLED EMBANKMENT AND INTO THE THICKETS OF A DEEP, WILD SWAMPLAND...
THE SOUNDS OF FERRET'S CRASHING PURSUIT IN HER EARS, CABLE RUNS WILDLY, RECKLESSLY INTO THE GLADES, INTO THE MUCK, AND--
--STRAIGHT INTO THE SWAMP THING'S CHEST.
THUD!
EEEE
IN THE NEXT MOMENT, FERRET COMES CRASHING INTO THE SCENE...
MOTHER OF GOD--!
28

IN A MIXTURE OF FEAR AND HATRED, FERRET CHARGES...
THE CREATURE LIFTS AN ARM IN A GESTURE OF PROTECTION FOR THE GIRL AND...
RAUUUGGHHHH!
AND WITH SUDDEN DREAD, FERRET READS HIS FATE IN THE MONSTER'S PAIN-ENRAGED EYES...
NO! NO!
NOOOOO!
SNAP!
THUMP!

UP AT LAST, PALE WITH FEAR—
LOOMING BEFORE HE— PROFFERING—
—AN ORCHID... LIKE THE ONE DR. HOLLAND GAVE ME THAT DAY BY THE SENSOR!
.. ALEC
NOW!
RAUUGH!
THE CREATURE WHIRLS IN RAGE, BUT ONLY
NET IS THROWN.
THE CREATURE IS IN LOVE WITH YOU, CABLE. THIS IS NOT SURPRISING, BUT IT IS VERY CONVENIENT ..
LOVE HAS SUCH UNEXPECTED REACTIONS.


SWAMP THING
PART 100
WE ARE HERE IN CELEBRATION... CELEBRATION OF AN EVENT OF PROFOUND SIGNIFICANCE -- THE DUPLICATION OF THE HOLLAND FORMULA!
FOR THIS WE MUST THANK THE EXCELLENCE OF ONE MAN... DEAR, DEAR BRUNO... WHO WON THE NOTEBOOK FROM WHICH WE EXTRACTED THE FINAL
CAPTURING
BUT SIR HAVE YOU TRIED IT OUT ON A PLANT YET? I MEAN, WHEN ARE WE GOING TO SEE THE RESULTS?

I HAVE GIVEN THE PRIVILEGE OF TAKING FIRST
NO! DON'T!
IT IS HE WHO WILL TELL US WHETHER OR NOT THE FORMULA
GLIK!
WHY--?
HMPH! INTERESTING BUT NOT EXACT
ISN'T BRUNO HAVE YOUR STRENGTH? WHAT DID WE DO WRONG? TELL ME!
STUPIDITY AND TIMIDITY. BUT IF THE ESSENCE IS GENIUS, THIS GENIUS SHALL BODY
SIMPLE!

AND MOMENTS LATER, AFTER ARCANE AND HIS HENCHMEN DEPART...
THE LIGHT, ALEC... REACH FOR IT!
YOU THRIVE ON IT-- REACH FOR THE LIGHT!
THE MONSTER TURNS AND STRETCHES HIS FINGERS JUST TIP INTO THE BRILLIANCE..
WHILE UPSTAIRS, ARCANE STARES GREEDILY INTO A FORMULA-LACED BRANDY...
TO BE IMMORTAL... TO REACH ABSOLUTE BEAUTY, ABSOLUTE STRENGTH AND POWER, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL, TO OWN THE WORLD!
. AND DOWNS IT...
AGHHHH!

AND BELOW, IN THE DUNGEON..
ALEC! YOUR OTHER ARM! LOOK AT IT!
IT...IT'S... GROWING!
THE MONSTER'S BODY SWELL IN THE GLOWING RAYS FROM THE SUN--WHERE HIS ARM HAS BEEN SEVERED...
...THERE NOW GROWS A THIN, VINE-LIKE EXTENTION OF WIRY GREEN FLESH AND SINEW...
WITH AMAZEMENT, THE THING THAT WAS ALEC HOLLAND BEHOLDS THE POWERFUL NEW APPENDAGE GROWING BEFORE HIM...
ARMS LIFTED TO THE NOURISHING SUNLIGHT, HIS GIANT SHADOW STREAMING BACK AGAINST THE STONE WALLS, HIS GREAT BODY SWELLS, UNTIL...
SNAP!
KRAK!
POP!

SWAMP THING
LISTEN!
HURRY!
PLEASE! THERE IS ANOTHER WAY!
LOOK!
BRUNO!
FOLLOW
I CAN'T REACH IT, BUT IF YOU'LL
GUARD
FOLLOW
OUT!

AIR CHAMBER IS A BLACK
HURRY!
THEY ROLL AND TUMBLE TOWARDS A DISTANT GLOW...

AND THEN...
ARCANE!
ALEC!

AS CABLE AND THE SWAMP THING REEL BACK IN AWE, THE TOWER-ING LEVIATHAN THAT WAS ARCANE ROARS FROM THE POOL..
IN AN ALL-OUT ATTACK OF INCREDIBLE SPEED AND FEROCITY...

BUT WITH AN EXTRAORDINARY MOVE, CABLE THROWS HERSELF IN FRONT OF THE TWO ANTAGONISTS AND TAKES THE FIRST BLOW HERSELF..
OH!!

RISING UP IN HORROR AND UNTETHERED RAGE--HIS BOTTOMLESS ANIMAL HATRED AT LAST FULLY RELEASED--
--THE SWAMP THING CHARGES...
KRAK
AIEEE
UNNGH!
THOK!
THWAK!

AT LAST, TREMBLING AND EXHAUSTED, THE SWAMP THING PREVAILS, DRIVING A TELLING BLOW TO THE CRUMBLING ARCANE-MONSTER...
THWD!
ALICE...
HOLDING HER TENDERLY IN HIS HUGE ARMS, HE SEES THE LIFE DRAINING FROM THE WOUND DEEP IN HER BREAST... THERE IS NOTHING HE CAN DO...
SUDDENLY, A THOUGHT OCCURS... HE PULLS A CLOT OF HIS OWN MOSSY FLESH..
...AND STUFFS IT GENTLY INTO THE WOUND...
THE BLEEDING, IT'S QUELLED!
BLINDED BY TEARS, THE SWAMP THING STARES DOWN GRATEFULLY, SO ABSORBED HE DOESN'T SEE ARCANE REARING UP BEHIND HIM, THE DEADLY SWORD GLINTING IN THE SUN...
FOR AN INSTANT, CABLE'S EYES BLINK OPEN...
ALEC--BEHIND YOU!!

THE SWAMP THING LEAPS UP IN A BLUR OF MOTION, CHECKING ARCANE'S DEATH-BLOW, YANKING THE SWORD FROM THE MONSTER'S HAND...
...AND, WITH ONE INCREDIBLE BLOW...

ARCANE'S GREAT ARMORED BODY TEETERS BACKWARD...
...AND TOPPLES INTO THE FROTHING SWAMP. THERE IS A HISSING EXPLOSION...
...THEN SILENCE...
MOMENTS LATER, SWAMP THING TURNS BACK TO THE GIRL...
I...I DON'T UNDERSTAND... MY WOUND... IT'S HEALING!
YES... IT'S OVER...
OVER?
ALEC--NO! LET ME GO WITH YOU, YOU CAN START YOUR WORK AGAIN!
YOU NEED TO HEAL--AND TO TELL OUR STORY. I'LL SEE YOU SOON... UNTIL THEN, I'LL ALWAYS BE WITH YOU...
MISS CABLE! YOU ALL RIGHT?
ALEC!
HE TOLD ME TO COME GET YOU!..
HE'LL BE BACK, THOUGH... RIGHT? RIGHT?
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THE END
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